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A Round Trip To Love - Contents

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Extras

Please note that there may be changes made here and there as Lan Lin is in the midst of republishing the book and has made a few edits to it in terms of the plot and diction. I will be purchasing the book when it comes out, so I will make edits according to the new version!

Synopsis

The blind fortuneteller at the mouth of the alley said to me, "Your road of love is destined to be one that's rough. You shall be forever intertwined with a man, and there won't be a peaceful ending."

I shoved my half-finished soda in his hands, patted myself down and left.

"Hey, you haven't paid!" The blind fortuneteller was still madly shouting from a distance.

Are you kidding me? You couldn't even work out whether I'm a man or woman and you still dare ask for money? I'm doing my daily good deed by not wrecking your stand.

Now, I'm sitting in a train station, disheveled and empty-handed, my face swelling like a pig's. Recalling the blind fortuneteller's words, I regret blowing him off with my unfinished soda. I should have given him some money. Unfortunately, I've been a fool up till today. My life has indeed been intertwined with a man, but I have not realised that nothing good will come out of it in the end...

Prologue

- This is for those who have left and those who have stayed in my life

A favourite poet of mine once said: "There's only one story, and only one story that's worth telling in detail." For me, that's exactly the case.

A prologue that's as long as a rabbit's tail:

The blind fortuneteller at the mouth of the alley said to me, "Your road of love is destined to be one that's rough. You shall be forever intertwined with a man, and there

won't be a peaceful ending."

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Are you kidding me? You couldn't even work out whether I'm a man or woman and you still dare ask for money? I'm doing my daily good deed by not wrecking your stand.

That was what I wrote for my first journal in my first year of high school. The teacher's remarks were: "On a certain level, it appears to shed some light on the falsity behind superstitious beliefs. However, some phrases used are too vulgar."

Long Way Home - Chapter 1

Aside from the fact that my essays always stray too far from the topic given or as mentioned before, lack elegance in my usage of language and hence cost me a few marks, my overall grades were basically good, simply put, I was close to being called a top student. That is why, before the placings for the midterm exams were out, I made a bet with Fatty and the rest that I would be able to attain a level placing in the top 15. This was a safe bet, for if I could get a pass for my essay, top 15 in the level would be an easy goal.

However, when the placings were released, I was ranked 16th.

Speechless, I treated Fatty and the rest to the student cafeteria's best fried noodles. Each person ate two big plates, and along with the noodles that disappeared, so did half of my week's allowance. (Dad and Mum used to give my brother and I our allowance weekly.) I was dissatisfied; my essay had surprisingly gotten a good pass, yet why was I unable to get into the top 15? I took out the seven scripts and went through each one of them carefully: out of a 100, Chinese 87, Mathematics 90, English 92, Physics 89, Political Science 86, History 69. My History must have pulled me down; it actually fell below 70 marks. Still unwilling to accept the placing, I went through the script thoroughly, hoping to spot a calculation error of one or two marks. The 15th rank belonged to Lu Feng, who was also from our class, and he only got one mark more than I did. Getting one mark back would mean I could share the spot with him. This wasn't about honour but rather about whether I would be able to eat this week.

With this final check, my blood started boiling, my face turned red with fury. I got a full score for the multiple-choice questions, but the teacher only gave me a big red tick, not a single mark out of the twenty marks was added to my final score.

Twenty, twenty marks..... Amongst the top 15, even half a mark could change everything, let alone forty half marks.

The me who was originally lying in the top bunk bed of the eight-people shared dorm awaiting death immediately sprang up, prepared myself to look for Fatty first to get the money back and then get my rightful marks back at the teachers' office. Suddenly, as soon as I lifted my head, I saw Lu Feng who resided in the lower bunk below me dash through the doorway excitedly, in his hands was an expensive-looking paper box.

"Cheng Yi Chen, come and check out my CD player."

It was the year 1996, in our small village back then, it was a time where many children could only enjoy the heavy cassette tape players, and carrying an AIWA Walkman was already a privilege that extended way beyond the MD-Player. I too, carried an unspeakable sense of curiosity and admiration as I examined the black gadget, and in the meantime, completely forgot about my usual stand of not bothering myself with Lu Feng.

Since the start of school, only half a term had gone past, but the cliques in which the boys hung out in were already more or less formed. Lu Feng and I were two different kinds of people that would never mix with the other no matter what. For me, as you guys

have seen, I was a good student and an obedient son. My brother who's younger than me by a year was still in his first year of junior secondary school while I was a quick student who moved up by a few grades to be in the first year of senior secondary school. Besides my marks, my other aspects were on the low side; my family's financial background was extremely normal, (I'll see you try if you had parents who are both earning an average salary and yet have to support a son, one without any knowledge in terms of managing finances, studying at a prestigious school.) I was taught from young that nothing was more valuable than the knowledge you get from books and was threatened with the usual scare "if you can't get into university, then you can go back to our hometown and plow through our ancestors' fields that extend for miles", hence, I would never compare myself with others. Be it in terms of my meals or attire, as long as it's edible or wearable, an example being my outfit from junior high, the standard blue or black long pants with a white top and white sneakers, I would still try to wear it. As expected, I had the most appropriate hairstyle that's aligned with the school rules, and a daily scene you would see would be me wearing an old-fashioned pair of glasses as I sat at my desk, occupied with work.

Lu Feng, on the other hand, he's..... um..... it isn't right to speak badly of someone behind their backs, so I would simply present an objective point of view, picking a few rumours I had heard through the grapevine.

Appearance: Apparently, he was the level's most stylish and handsome male student, and if compared to Andy Lau or Aaron Kwok, they wouldn't stand a chance. (Really? Why didn't anyone find a Chinese man with a high nose bridge and deep amber eyes strange?)

Family background: Yes..... I heard that his father was a Chinese American, but anyway Lu Feng is a person of mixed race, and just putting this out here, from the start of junior high, Lu Feng's family had been donating large sums of money to the school yearly to build this and that.

Academics: Um..... Let's just say the fact that he had entered the top 15 was as senseless as the fact that I hadn't enter the top 15.

Character: Eh, this sensitive question makes it hard to arrive at an answer, but the money that his father had donated was partly for the removal of records of Lu Feng's multiple fights. In one of the years of junior high, he had miraculously not been caught for the whole year. The finance department was said to have been riddled with anxiety for quite a while then.

Simply concluded, none of us look up to the other.

This new machine had obviously made us forget about this as we sat together listening to Lu Feng's collection of CDs of popular rock artists who I had never heard of.

"The sound quality is quite good, isn't it?" Lu Feng excitedly chattered, "My father's a man who keeps his words. Getting into the top 15 this time all depended on luck."

I immediately understood. This was the prize Lu Feng asked for from his father.

Feeling the history paper in my hands, I hesitated. I didn't like Lu Feng, but I couldn't bear to dampen his spirits at the moment.

"Like it? I'm going out to play soccer in the afternoon, do you want to borrow it first?"

Gosh, this was hateful..... He was too generous.

I quickly rolled up the paper hidden behind my back. Forget it, the cost of the plates of fried noodles wouldn't even add up to half a piece of the CD player's antenna.

Lu Feng scooped up the soccer ball below his table, and shouting the names of the boys next door, he left. The player was still sitting on my desk. I sighed. "Because of you; to protect you I'll have to starve for two days."

Throwing my script aside, I picked up an English textbook for a read on Lu Feng's bed before I gradually fell asleep.

Go on, sleep, once you fall asleep you'll no longer be hungry.

When I woke up, Lu Feng was already back, his eyes carefully examining something in his hand as he stood by the bedside rubbing his hair dry. I wandered for a moment before realising that was my history paper.

"Your marks are tabulated wrongly." Seeing that I had woken up, Lu Feng lifted the paper, his tone calm yet unfriendly.

I muttered an "oh" in return.

"Why don't you go correct it? You might just become 1st if the marks were added."

"If I changed it, you would..." As expected, I was never one with the gift of gab after a nap. Who knew, Lu Feng was one with an immense amount of pride, and the look on his face obviously changed upon hearing these words.

"I know you look down on me. When the final exams come about, I'll be able to get a placing above you just fine by myself, you don't have to pretend to care."

Well, so much for being nice.

"I don't have any other intentions. That player is pretty neat, but as to whether you want it or not, that is your problem, it has nothing to do with me. I have no need to curry favour with you, and I'm not looking down on anyone, so don't be so narrow-hearted." I was too lazy to say any more, and with a quick eye roll, I snatched my paper back.

The room was quiet for some time before I heard him spoke.

"How about this, I don't like owing people favours, so let me treat you to a meal."

This person is pretty irritating, treating someone to a meal immediately after having scolded them off.

After giving it some thought and finding that I was indeed hungry, I nodded. "Sure."

After that, I often thought, if I wasn't for this exchange, if Lu Feng and I had kept our distance and simply brushed past each other as usual, the future, my future, his future, would perhaps have been different.

I never expected that Lu Feng would go to such a great expense for the meal.

Repeating myself again, that was the year 1996, Kentucky's chicken wasn't as commonly found in the past. To eat that meal of KFC, it required a one hour plus journey on an old bumpy bus before they reached the city. To be honest, my knowledge on these American fast foods only extended till what I've read about them or seen on television, and as a result, Lu Feng called me old-fashioned for I had on a serious and respectful expression as I dipped the French fries in the tomato sauce with deep concentration, even more so than when I do an analysis question in Chemistry.

Even though I was mercilessly made fun of and laughed at by Lu Feng, that became one of my life's most unforgettable meals, and that feeling would never return in the future as I sit in the KFC by the street eating a burger and pieces of chicken.

Maybe a person's first indeed leaves the strongest memories.

This will then explain why in the many years to come, I would still fail to forget this man called Lu Feng.

For as many firsts he had given me, he had taken just as much away from me.

Long Way Home - Chapter 2

From then on, Lu Feng and I naturally became closer. After sufficient time spent with the other and realising that the other wasn't as hateful as he seemed and could be in fact, rather cute at times, our relationship rapidly became stronger. I guess the two of us were initially opposites that attracted (personality-wise) but gradually, we kind of rubbed off each other, as seen from Lu Feng's decreasing demerits and my increased cursing.

Not long after our friendship had stabilised, Lu Feng started his criticisms towards my appearance.

"You look really ugly with these glasses, kind of like a mushroom."

God, just when I start being nice, you start crossing the line.

"It's none of your business."

"It's really ugly though."

"If you're going to continue, then write the essay yourself." At that time, I was working on an essay for the useless trash who repays kindness with evil beside me in exchange for three of the canteen's famous pot-stewed chicken drumstick. The essay's title was "My View On Cheating". The school's something something cup essay competition didn't receive enough submissions and hence set a target amount to be collected from each class regardless of the quality.

Both Lu Feng and I hit the jackpot, all thanks to his wide smile after hearing my name being called which resulted in his name being the next one called, which then resulted in me being the smiling one instead. Lu Feng was rather strong in his maths and sciences, but when it came to his two languages, his mistakes could make one cry, making it hard to believe that he was a Chinese, and an American Chinese at that. Rumour had it his midterms' essay was written merely with his stream of consciousness, and by stream of consciousness it meant that he wrote whatever he saw, for example, if he saw a bird fly past or observed that the girl in front of him had on a skirt that was revealing her thighs, he could perhaps try to write a poem of sorts, but to write an essay based on that.....

When he received an average result, I guessed the teacher must have been captured by the absolutely mysterious introduction and conclusion. Lu Feng's good handwriting that looked just like a work of calligraphy must have left a strong impression as well. But if a miracle happens again, it wouldn't be called a miracle anymore. That was why Lu Feng's usual essays were basically pathetic scraps of paper, no matter how you looked at it, it was only at the standard of a primary school child. Giving him a pass was already a lot to ask. Lu Feng himself was clear about this, hence, he had taken the initiative to buy the chicken drumsticks and placed them in my lunchbox in front of me in order to give me some mental strength, at the same time, buttering me up further by fanning me from the side. (It was the end of November where people needed a woolen sweater to get by.)

For my own essay, I had painstakingly written my comments, analysis and reflections about the unhealthy practices in the exam hall, and at the end, I had included a deep and sincere message, "For socialism, we as students should have a strong foundation in our education journey and should never cheat!" My essay was the perfect example of "a good youth's traditional ideas on socialism".

As for Lu Feng's, with a swish of the pen, I fired away with my baseless theories, reprimanding the education system and demanding for changes to be made.

"If it exists, it must be reasonable. When cheating has changed from a rare occurrence to a frequent problem, changed from a figment of one's imaginations to a habit, then we have to take a closer look at why this is reasonable....."

"It is a gentleman's clever use of other tools rather than his prominent wisdom that helps him stand out.", "A good wind relies on borrowed strength to send me up to the heavens.", when an individual's ability is limited, appropriate usage of other tools as means to reach his target cannot be said to be an unfair shortcut. From an educational point of view, I believe..."

"Furthermore, just like how the public's worries over their security do not necessarily reflect the decreased quality in character among people but rather the instability amongst the government, the increased frequency of cheating cases do not reflect the student's lack of knowledge and ideas. The real problem lies with our education system which is full of gaps. A change in the education system is therefore a much more pressing and effective measure as compared to catching students who are cheating in the

exam hall..."

The rest was pretty much similar to those written above, all simply lines of nonsense which feared no god. The rant had left me rather contented when I was done. Watching me write as if I was possessed and coming up with large chunks of text within a mere half an hour, Lu Feng was too dazed to even guess that I was digging his grave.

After finishing, I munched away at the drumsticks, laughing to myself now and then. That big idiot Lu Feng didn't even give it a second glance before writing his own name and shoving the paper in his bag for submission tomorrow.

"Xiao Chen, don't wear this pair of glasses anymore, they look terrible." A standard example of biting the hand that feeds you.

"....." I wiped my mouth, then started, "My eyes don't look good, wearing this would shield you from some of that ugliness." A boy's looks didn't really matter, but having been criticised multiple times, I didn't feel all that comfortable either.

"Why don't you take it off? It wouldn't be worse than this current look anyway."

"....." I turned around and ignored him.

"Come on, Xiao Chen, we have no idea how you look without your glasses either. Remove them so we can have a look."

"I rather not... I'll look terrible and give you guys a scare." It wasn't my fault that I was born ugly, but there was no need to show off this fact.

Suddenly, caught off guard, my vision became a blur as my glasses were removed by Lu Feng. Since the first year of senior high, my left eye had a power of 375 while my right was 425 (this later seemed to remain the same for about 7-8 years), and with my relatively bad astigmatism, the sudden loss of my glasses made everything before me appear as a mere blur, so all I could do was blankly stare ahead with my mouth slightly opened in shock.

My surroundings became quiet, and only after a while then did I hear the dorm head Xiao Shan laugh dryly before saying, "Xiao Chen..... You actually look quite cute."

Lu Feng returned my glasses by placing them on my face again. "Forget it, you should just keep wearing them."

"I already said I would look bad." I faintly smiled. Strangely, I felt a little upset over Lu Feng's remark.

I can't deny it, Lu Feng is the level's most charming male student. Due to the mixed genes, his features are a lot more distinct than most people. If you looked that good, you would definitely be more picky towards others' appearances - I'm simply comforting myself.

I'm actually still quietly hoping that Lu Feng wouldn't find me ugly.

Lu Feng gave me a small smile. After everyone had gone out of the dorm room to prepare for the night's self study in the classrooms, he scooted closer to me and reminded me, "Don't let others see you without your glasses in the future."

"I got it." My tone wasn't all that kind. "I'm not wicked enough to go out and scare others when I have nothing to do."

Lu Feng's smile grew wider. "You understand my meaning?"

Irritated, I pushed him away. "Go away, I've to go for self-study now. If you find me ugly, stay further away from me. Don't stand here lest I scare you."

Suddenly, he grabbed me and pulled me towards him, his head lowering to speak lowly in my ear, "I'm saying, that look from before made me feel like kissing you."

"You- Have you gone crazy?" I was stunned for a moment, my face turning a ripe red before I bellowed angrily.

Lu Feng chuckled.

I turned around to avoid looking at that arrogant smirk on his face and kept myself busy by packing my journal and practice questions for the self-study session.

"Eh? Where are my socks?" Lu Feng lowered his head as he searched the room.

"I washed them."

This man looked absolutely fresh and clean from the outside, but on the inside, he was a mess. He never washes his socks, and after wearing a pair, he would put them under his pillow. Once all the socks have gathered under his pillow, he would pick a pair that was not as dirty or smelly as the rest and wear them. About more than half a school term had passed, but not once have I seen him wash his socks. I would bet that if I took any one of them, it would be hard enough for it to stand upright on the floor by itself. Even though I slept on the top bunk, I could barely stand the smell, and yet he didn't find it in the least bit disgusting. In the afternoon, after class, when he was out buying the chicken drumsticks, I took the chance and washed all of those pungent socks. It was only after I hung them up to dry then did I realise there was more than a dozen of them. Gosh.

"You washed them?" Lu Feng lifted his head, casting me a strange look.

"Wh-why?" I was starting to think that there were millions of pounds worth of notes in them seeing his terrifying expression.

"Xiao Chen, you helped me wash my socks?"

"Yes..." I was confused.

"I love you!" Lu Feng spread his arms and immediately gave me a hug. Having not avoided it, I was forcefully wrapped in his arms and given a peck on my face.

"You pervert!" The shock was too much for my heart to take.

"I am a pervert." Lu Feng smiled sneakily. "Here, I'll kiss you once more."

"Dream on." I smacked a thick chemistry textbook on his face, only to be smoothly grabbed by the arm and pressed down on the bed.

"Hey, stop it!" I begged, "I'm ticklish..." Before I could finish, I felt a small attack on my waist, causing me to erupt in laughter.

"Ticklish?" Lu Feng was smiling. "How about this spot? Here? Or here?"

The places he touched felt as if I had come into contact with lightning, making me curl up into a ball, laughing till I found it hard to breathe.

"Xiao Chen, you're really sensitive."

"If I'm ticklish, I'm ticklish. Why is there a need for such a sensual word?" I got up, eyeing his complicated expression as he bit down on his lower lip, his amber eyes sparkling.

"Why are you acting so weirdly? Did you hit your head or something?"

"Nothing." He smiled, wearing his Nike sports shoes barefooted before picking his bag up. "Let's go for self-study."

Long Way Home - Chapter 3

Lu Feng going for self-study could be used as an idiom, its meaning: a phenomenon that rarely or doesn't ever happen.

Most of his time was spent outside of school fighting and getting himself in trouble. (As mentioned before, this was our school's main source of dirty income.)

Just recently, he had broken a neighboring school's gang leader's arm using a chair, giving him a notorious name among the high schoolers in the district. It was the generation where school violence was all the rage; those who watched too many gangster films imitated their actions and struck fast and hard, gang leaders were appointed if they were capable of smashing beer bottles on others' heads with no mercy and were thought to be heroic.

Being one of the leader's favourite followers, I was envied by many. Only I, however, understood the feeling of not wishing to be dragged down by this fellow who was capable

of insulting the discipline master's line of ancestors in his best voice right after exiting his office where he had just been reprimanded in.

"Xiao Chen, let's go ice skating. I'll treat you."

"No, I've done nothing to deserve it."

This sort of conversation was common between us. Lu Feng was rich, naturally, he was generous towards his friends. However, I was one who would never accept any benefits from anyone without having earned them. Dad had strictly taught me and my brother from young with the help of the feather duster: "Firstly, don't ever steal. Secondly, don't ever be greedy." By greedy, he meant gaining petty advantages. So between Lu Feng and I, we draw a clear line when it comes to matters of money. Even when we go hiking and get a bottle of mineral water, I would pay him back every single cent. I saw myself as being upright by doing this, but Lu Feng often got angry because of this.

As expected, he angrily knitted his brows as he stared at me. After staring for a while and realising I was not in the least bit shaken, he changed his tone.

"You definitely deserve this. Let's go for two rounds and take it as a means of expressing my gratitude to you."

"Huh?"

"That essay you helped me complete the last time, it won the first prize in the competition. My father was generous with the reward he gave me."

I froze, stunned.

Seriously? How did that happen? That nonsensical essay actually got the first prize?

Why did things turn out this way? I had never won a single prize for the essays I wrote, and for merely three chicken drumsticks, I've given the prize away to him...

In those days, ice skating was popular amongst the high schoolers, reason being the lights and atmosphere there was suitable for some hanky-panky. Boys would bring pretty girls to skate in hopes of becoming closer, openly holding their hands or touching their waists under the guise of teaching, even planning their falls carefully such that the girl would end up in their arms when they fall. Most of the time, the relationship between two people would be brought to the next level after having skated together, and if luck's on their side, they might hit a homerun.

When we were changing our shoes outside, many people greeted Lu Feng. "Ah Feng, you didn't bring a pretty girl here today?" "Ah Feng, you're alone?"

Damn it, does being a man mean that I'm not human?

Having not have the experience of even touching a female's hand before, I got annoyed. "Hey, it seems like you're rather promiscuous. Exactly how many girls have you skated with?"

"Wait, let me count..."

He actually started counting with his fingers. I expressed my irritation with an "urgh" before standing up and wobbly made my way towards the rink by leaning on the wall.

"Xiao Chen, you suck," he shouted out.

"Shut up!" Even without your loud announcement, anyone could see I was a novice.

Honestly, that was my first try at ice-skating. I should deserve a consolation prize for being able to stand on my feet, not the words "you suck".

Lu Feng was playing real fine in the rink while all I could do was hold on to the railings as I unsteadily moved. Safely making my first step was as moving as Man's first step on the moon for me.

"Xiao Chen, let me help you." After skating two rounds and seeing that I was still hanging on to the railings for my dear life, he came over and started nagging, "You'll never learn it in this lifetime at this rate."

"Shoo shoo shoo." I vigorously swatted with my right hand as if I was swatting at flies. "You go and play it your way, I'll learn it slowly."

That shameless fellow ambushed me again, pulling my arms forcefully. Once my hands left that life-saving railing, I screamed aloud, my screams akin to that of one drowning. After struggling for a while, I realised I was stubbornly clinging onto Lu Feng's shoulder.

"I knew it, you wanted to make me fall to my death!"

Lu Feng laughed. "You didn't fall, did you? Come on, I'll hold you. I'm much better than those railings."

He was definitely more reliable than those railings, especially since the railings wouldn't be there to save me when I shout for help. With my left hand intertwined with his index finger and my right hand stretched outwards to maintain my balance, Lu Feng stayed by my side, his right hand staying put around my waist. In this position, we managed to skate one round around the rink, and by the time we were done, my palms were wet with sweat.

"Let's try one more round."

"Let me off please," I pitifully begged, "I'm not good at balancing. I will never get the hang of it."

"What are you saying, you can almost stand straight now, let's practice a little more..."

Across from us, a couple was unsteadily headed straight for the both of us, and just when it seemed that the great clash of the novices would happen, Lu Feng's quick reflexes pulled me to the side to avoid it. I wasn't able to duck as elegantly as he did and slipped, resulting in a teary-eyed me gripping tightly onto Lu Feng's clothes as I whimpered sadly on the floor.

That time round, I had finally seen Lu Feng's reliability as a living banister.

"I think I'll rather not continue anymore." I was pathetically leaning on Lu Feng's chest sobbing softly. It was a bit uncomfortable for two men to be so close together, but Lu Feng's hug was tight, so I didn't bother struggling to break free.

"Let's try it again," he said lightly.

"Are you really not satisfied till I fall and break my limbs?"

"With me here, you won't fall."

Although Lu Feng spoke bravely, I still broke something - someone had approached from behind and with the loss of the reliable Lu Feng's hold, I fell straight down to meet the ground.

"....." The pain had made me speechless.

"Is he fucking blind?" Lu Feng angrily cursed as he quickly bent down to help me up. "Are you alright?"

"How could I be alright?" Although it was embarrassing, I wanted to cry out loud at the pain when he accidentally made contact with my ankle. "I sprained my ankle!"

I became quite a sight in school the next two days by hopping about with one foot to get around. Often, I was cursing while hopping, and for those who didn't know better, they would have thought "as expected, a top student still remains strong even when he's injured" by looking at my strict face as I mumbled on, thinking that even under such circumstances I would still be memorising formulas.

"Xiao Chen, are you feeling better today?"

The target of all my vicious cursing was waving a bottle of medicated oil in my face.

"You wish. It's going to hurt for a hundred days."

"Oh, that leaves only ninety-eight more days then."

I was almost driven nuts. He clumsily applied the medicine on my ankle and asked, "Where else does it hurt?"

I harshly retorted, "My butt!"

Wasn't that obvious after directly hitting the ground with that much force?

"Oh?" He raised his eyebrows with a sly smile, "Want me to help you massage it?"

"....." Since we were both males, I personally thought it was no big deal, but that look on his face unsettled me. "N...no thanks, it doesn't hurt that bad."

Unexpectedly, the pain got worse the next day. Perhaps the words "doesn't hurt that

bad" meant the pain would extend till the tailbone, making even the simple action of lifting your waist a tremendous one. My right foot also swelled bigger, rendering me useless without a single foot to even hop on as I cried helplessly in bed.

Long Way Home - Chapter 4

As seen commonly in essays written by primary school students, there would be that one helpful ace student who would willingly shoulder the responsibility of taking care of the wounded student before and after lessons, carrying the wounded on his back no matter rain or shine.

That one helpful student of course had to be Lu Feng.

At the start, when he wanted to carry me on his back, I refused. Spraining your ankle while ice-skating wasn't a glorious thing, so I didn't dare lie proudly on his back for all to see. Lu Feng was far too tall; I would stand out no matter where he carried me to.

But it was near the end of the term, and notes were of the utmost importance, so even if I had to crawl to class, I would do it. Immediately, Lu Feng took up the job and started transporting me around like a batch of cargo.

The distance between the dorm and the classroom block wasn't long, but there were plenty of stairs. Lu Feng, being used to his role as a young master, was rather rough with the way in which he carried me, usually throwing me harshly on the bed and making me cry out in pain or hitting the walls every time we turn at the stairways.

"Damn it, do you take me as a sandbag?"

I held in my tears as I counted the numerous bruises that had mysteriously appeared. Lu Feng, who was in charge of applying the medicated oil for me, had just about touched every single spot on my body.

"My back was reserved for a ravishing beauty, you should count yourself lucky to be the first to have earned this honour."

"Hey, can you not judge others by their looks? Even though I'm no beauty, I am at least a man with intellectual beauty."

"Here, open your mouth." Lu Feng had opened the lunchbox. My three meals were now bought by him.

"....." I avoided the spoon uncomfortably. "I didn't get a stroke, just sprained my ankle. Do you really need to feed me?"

"Stop being so long-winded. Open up."

"No!"

However, due to his quick and firm actions, my jaw was still helplessly pinched open as he sent the spoonful of rice into my mouth.

I know I don't eat delicately, but you don't have to keep staring at my mouth.

I miserably finished my meal with his continuous feeding, even receiving the service of having my mouth wiped clean for me.

"...are you done cleaning?" My lips were burning, my skin feeling as if it was about to tear off.

"There's still a little dirt here."

Just wipe it away, you're not short-sighted, there's no need for you to come so close. When it was nearing the holidays, Lu Feng's desk had accumulated a pile of love letters.

"I really don't know what they see in you. With an honest man like me here, they still choose to fall for you." I was green with envy.

"You're jealous?"

For the umpteenth time, I casted a resentful look at him.

"Have you never been confessed to by a girl?"

"That's expected," I huffed angrily, "I'm with you all day long. Your tall figure has stolen the spotlight away from me, so how would they see me? No, in the future, I'll have to keep my distance from you and stay far far away."

I wasn't one who stood out in the first place, but standing next to Lu Feng's glorious self had basically turned me invisible in the eyes of others.

"Don't you dare!" His voice was suddenly harsh. My usual timid self quickly shook my head, "Nope, of course not."

"Xiao Chen." When Lu Feng sat beside me, he would habitually put his arms around my shoulders. "You really want to get a girlfriend?"

"Of course..." Seeing his glare I quickly mumbled, "No..." I haven't reached the age of puberty then, so I had no fantasies about the opposite sex. The wish to be popular among the females was simply to gratify my vanity.

"Let's make a promise, as long as I don't have a girlfriend, you can't fall for any girl either."

It sounded like an unfair deal, and honestly it was a contract that had no legal effect. With Lu Feng attracting people left and right without even having to try and his lack of moral principles, I might not even have the chance to touch a girl's finger before a group of children surround him and call him "Dad".

I nodded indifferently. Lu Feng smiled, crumpling the letters before throwing them into the bin without a second glance.

Long Way Home - Chapter 5

Everyone was excited for the first winter break of senior high, but the thought of four weeks without Lu Feng made me a little upset. It was the first time in my life experiencing this feeling of missing someone, but the person in mind was... a man...
urgh.

I took five days to finish the holiday homework we had, and while I was at it, I helped my younger brother with one of his. Yi Chen was busy playing his guitar, willing to give up food and sleep for it. He had become obsessed with Japanese bands, even hugging his secondhand guitar with his fingers moving in his sleep. The group of rascals had even formed a band of their own, its name was... they might not have settled on a name, because I remember being asked to flip through the dictionary with my eyes closed to pick two words. In the end, the first word I chose was "diarrhea", the second "cancer". No matter how you placed them, the name would have a terrible sound to it, hence it was dismissed.

That unlucky boy didn't score well in his finals, and with the knowledge that I got a reward from Mum and Dad after getting third in the level, he came to his cute older brother to borrow some money. I prayed that he would return me the money once he received his red packet during the new year. Even though I knew the money wasn't going to be returned, I still gave it to him. If you had a brother who loved clinging to you from young, sharing even the fifty cents he found on the ground and looked just like you, your heart would melt too.

As long as he didn't play his guitar in the next room at odd hours in the morning. Yi Chen had gone to his friend's house to practise, so I was bored to death alone. Besides, the drama serial that was on could bore one to tears, so I dazedly watched the commercials, changing the channel or going to the washroom once the serial started again. Mum wanted to watch Chiung Yao's works, so I stayed, becoming incredibly bothered by those middle-aged women crying until the phone rang. Mum was too engrossed to notice, so I got up instinctively and went round the dining table to pick up the phone.

"Hello? Who are you looking for?"

"Xiao Chen?"

I brightened up immediately. "Lu Feng!"

"What happened at home? Why do I hear someone crying so woefully?"

"Shut your trap! Don't curse me, you're the one that's going to have something happen to you, that's just the television program XXXXXX"

"Oh really? We're watching it too."

After competing who could use the most insulting words to criticise Chiung Yao's classic works, Lu Feng suddenly asked, "Xiao Chen, do you miss me?"

"...gross..."

"Do you miss me or not?" he persisted.

".....a little." I felt extremely uncomfortable after saying it aloud, my face slowly turning hot.

"Oh," he sounded really happy. "I missed you so much. My father brought me out to have fun for a few days, and the first thing I did when we got home was to give you a call. How did you spend the last few days?"

"I finished all the assignments." I was as proud as a peacock.

"You're brilliant! Come over a few days before school reopens.let me copy some of the homework."

"You still dare speak so loudly when you're asking to copy someone else's work?"

Before we knew it, we had actually talked for two whole hours. When I hung up the phone, my left ear had become red from pressing the phone against it.

Turning around, I found that Mum was no longer staring at the television, and was now staring at me.

"A female friend?!"

"It's a male."

Mum was still looking at me with an expression that screamed "you're lying to me" as she nagged, "Xiao Chen ah, you're only in your first year of senior high, don't date anyone yet, it's not good for you. If your father finds out, he'll beat you to death..."

"I'm not seeing anyone. How do you expect any girl to fall for me if you gave me these looks?"

"What looks? You look fine, don't you? Your nose looks like a proper nose, your eyes look like proper eyes."

".....it's just that my nose is positioned above my eyes isn't it?"

"What are you talking about? The aunts living downstairs all say Ah Chen and you were born handsome."

"Mum, you're not saying this just because I look like you right? If I'm ugly, just say so, I won't blame you."

"Hey, when you were born, you weren't the least bit ugly. Go take a look at the photo on your birth certificate, look at how big your eyes were, it was you who made them smaller by crying all the time..."

I made a beeline for my room, leaving Mum and her nagging outside the door.

After that day, Lu Feng made a call every single day. Once Mum, Dad and even Yi Chen had taken turns picking up and confirmed he was a male, they no longer questioned me. But being a mother, she would never run out of things to nag about.

"Xiao Chen ah, don't spend too much time talking to your friend on the phone, the bills are not cheap. One phone call of yours could pay for a poor family's month worth of meals..."

"Mum, you don't have to be so concerned with our country and its people. He's the one who calls, not me, and his family isn't the least bit poor."

"Aiya, you two can talk to each other when you go back to school too. A long distance call within the state costs sixty cents per minute, that means it'll be thirty-six

dollars for an hour, and seventy-two dollars for two hours..." Mum's math was rarely this good. "Youngsters these days don't know how hard it is for their parents to make money..."

After listening to her nagging for a whole day, when Lu Feng called at night, I worriedly told him, "Let's not talk for too long, it must have cost you quite an amount after all these hours."

"Okay, I won't call from tomorrow onwards."

"....." I was stupefied. "You're... you're really straightforward."

"I've always been straightforward."

".....I'll call you tomorrow instead then."

"That doesn't mean your calls are free. There's no need."

"....." Maybe he had always found me annoying, but I was just too slow in realising. I could no longer get my spirits up, and even though I hung up the phone early to go to bed, I couldn't fall asleep.

Lu Feng..... well..... Lu Feng..... That fellow was really hateful.

Translator's note: I thought I should clarify something in the chapter for those who might be confused. All this time, you've been reading the story from Yi Chen's point of view, and by Yi Chen, I meant the older brother, 亦辰. Note, his younger brother's name has the exact same pronunciation and spelling (in English), but the characters used in Chinese are different, which is 亦晨. As for how 辰 and 晨 differs in their meaning, our main character will give a short explanation in a chapter far far away :))

Long Way Home - Chapter 6

As I ate breakfast with heavy dark circles, Yi Chen was still in his room playing the pipa, oh, I meant guitar, while Mum and Dad were in the kitchen cooking. Our family's eating habits were rather unbelievable; we ate porridge for all three meals, the only difference was how thin or thick it was. The side dishes didn't differ much either. We usually woke up to plain porridge coupled with a chicken drumstick or some crab meat.

Someone was knocking on the door. Who could it be? Even if it was the spring festival, there was no need to visit at seven in the morning.

"Xiao Chen, go and see who's there. If it's the milkman, pass him the money on the table."

Right, Mum ordered fresh milk right after we came back from our trip. Every morning after we had our porridge and crab or chicken, we would drink milk. It was quite unbelievable.

I took the money, opened the door, took the bag in the milkman's hands and paid him, but once the door was shut again, there was a knocking sound again.

Uncle, you're really annoying. If you have any other business here, why not do it in one go?

Angrily, I opened the door. "Uncle....."

"Uncle? You dare to call me uncle when I'm this young?!" The tall handsome youth at the door smiled. "Have you gone dumb? You can't be serious... I woke up at 4 just to catch the first bus at 5 to see you and you're not even letting me in?"

My face flushed red for quite some time as I remained speechless. Only being able to move, I gave him a strong punch, and feeling that it wasn't enough, I added another kick.

After letting him in, I realised he was carrying two pieces of tofu in his hands.

"....." I blankly pointed. "What is this for?"

"The shops along the street were still closed, the only one open was a tofu store. Naturally, I had to buy something if he helped me with the directions."

So the first gift Lu Feng gave Mum and Dad was two pieces of tofu.

The two of them just so happened to be making their traditional tofu dish but realised that there was no tofu in the fridge and was debating over who should walk down five storeys. Seeing the gift, they immediately broke into smiles, praising Lu Feng for being considerate.

Lu Feng and I stuck together like glue for the entire day, hiding in my small bedroom with the door closed as we sat on the bed and chatted away, smiling as we looked at each other when we weren't speaking. I showed off my valued collections one by one to Lu Feng, and although they weren't especially rare or special to him, he still poked his head over excitedly from the back as he hugged my waist, his chin resting on my shoulders as he looked at the photos and figurines seriously, his warm breath tickling my ear.

When night had fallen, we were still reluctant to part, so Mum and Dad generously welcomed Lu Feng to stay for the night. He refused at first before "reluctantly" accepting. No one was better than him when it came to pretending to be a saint.

I had long snuggled under the blankets as I waited for Lu Feng, watching him slowly remove his thick winter clothes. Lu Feng was four years older than me, his body developing well. Although he was skinny, he looked big with his height, whereas I was still struggling to grow taller, hence seeing his healthy broad back made me sigh with admiration.

"What is it?" He snuggled in, wrapping one arm around my shoulders.

"What does your mum feed you? You're so tall."

"Bullwhips." He was smiling evilly again.

"Go away, it wouldn't be your height that's growing if you ate that."

"My height's tall* too."

"Haha..."

Maybe because of the chilly weather, we wrapped ourselves in a tight embrace as we slept.

Lu Feng's body warmth was something I liked.

Lu Feng stayed for two more days before he left. Mum and Dad were rather enthusiastic, but Yi Chen was a little wary. "Ge**, don't just keep talking to him and ignore me. We started sleeping in separate rooms when we were six, so why does he get to sleep with you?" Okay, I'll admit Yi Chen seemed to show too much affection for it to be normal among siblings, but at that time, both of us didn't think much about it.

Two days before school started, I could no longer wait and decided to abandon Yi Chen and head straight for school. Opening the door, I found Lu Feng in the dorm with his back to me unpacking his luggage. Upon hearing some movement, he turned around and smiled widely.

"Xiao Chen, I brought you some chocolates."

"Lu Feng, I brought you some meat floss."

We said this in unison, making us crack up in laughter.

My mum's meat floss... every shred was at least 1mm thick, which was probably ten times thicker than those sold in stores. It was obvious she made this purely out of boredom, akin to how she would repeatedly take my old sweaters and tear them apart to be made into gloves and then tear those apart to be made into socks which were then torn apart to be knitted into scarves. Lu Feng tried some the other day when he visited, and because of his casual remark and the fact that hardly anyone ever praises Mum, she forced me to pack some in a ziplock bag for him.

As we sat by his bed listening to a CD while taking and snacking, the finely made Swiss chocolates of course, attracted me more than my mum's homemade meat floss. I carefully placed each exquisite piece of chocolate into my mouth; the slight bitter taste it left as it melted was absolutely addictive, and without me realising, the box was soon empty.

Just when I had shoved the last piece into my mouth, Lu Feng exclaimed, "Hey hey hey, you could have at least left me one."

"There's none left." I playfully opened my mouth. "Unless you want this one?"

"Okay." He actually pushed me down, and cupping my face, he pressed his lips against mine.

I was shell-shocked, dazedly allowing his tongue to enter and lick the half-melted chocolate once over before eating it.

When he released me, he did an act of swallowing before smirking. "That was delicious."

I could still feel the soft and warm sensation lingering on my lips and the tip of my tongue. It was as if I was struck by lightning, my mind had gone blank, my face a steaming red as I remained tongue-tied.

"Your face has gone red." Lu Feng was smiling real evilly. "How innocent."

It was then I realised he was fooling around with me, and with a mix of anger and

embarrassment, I picked up a pillow and started hitting him. "Son of a bitch, go to hell!"

He was smiling as he dodged my attacks. "You're really interesting, blushing just like a girl."

I threw the pillow away and ignored him.

Those horrible kind of jokes did not die down after that, and in fact, got worse. When we were together, he would pinch my waist or thighs out of the blue when no one was noticing, pulling tricks that were even more embarrassing. Once I started blushing again, he would always laugh it off saying, "I'm just playing around, it's just a joke, don't take it to heart."

I was different from him. He could make a joke out of anything he wanted, but I treated things seriously.

Translator's note: *The word he used for tall here actually means long in Chinese, so yes, there was perhaps a small sexual joke there. **Ge actually means older brother in Chinese, but I thought it would be strange to translate it as it is since no one actually calls their brother by "older brother" here so I decided to leave it as it was.

Long Way Home - Chapter 7

There was only one washroom per level in the dorms, the interior separated into three areas: the showering room, the toilets and the basins. The showers were open, meaning that there were no cubicles that separated the shower heads. Lu Feng and I always chose shower heads that were side by side to talk to each other while we bathed, but because of his recent childish jokes, the atmosphere had become rather tense between us, making our bathing time much more quiet.

There was no one else in the washroom. I was quietly washing my hair, Lu Feng washing up beside me until he suddenly commented, "Xiao Chen, your ass is rather voluptuous."

I was taken aback, awkwardly turning around to wash the soap off my hair as I avoided his line of vision. "Stop talking nonsense."

He wasn't letting me go. "Has anyone ever told you that your legs look beautiful? They're so long and straight."

"One more word and I'll sue you for trying to take liberties with me."

"Or, you could return the favour." He laughed.

I sneaked a glance at his naked body before quickly lowering my gaze again. "Forget it, I can't get any dirtier than you."

I was a little flustered, washing myself hurriedly to get myself dry as soon as possible. Lu Feng was already fully dressed and was waiting for me as his eyes explored

my body.

I wore my pants, lifting my head to glare at him. "What are you looking at? Stop acting like a hooligan."

He grinned slyly. "I want to act like one, what are you going to do about it?"

Before I could move away, he had reached over and pinched my chest harshly. The pain was enough to make me cry out in shock. "What are you doing?"

"Aww, are you angry?" His smile wasn't fading. "I'm just joking around, don't be so petty."

"....it hurts! You used too much strength!"

"Oh really?" He was still smiling, seemingly unaffected.

At night, as I lay in bed, the pain on my chest kept me awake. Taking off my pajamas to take a look, I realised my nipples had swelled up with the slightest wisps of blood. Lu Feng's strength was terrifying. I found his sudden act of violence hard to understand, his cheeky looks making him even more intolerable.

But he was, after all, my best friend. To let this kind of thing affect our relationship would be... making a big deal out of nothing.

Lu Feng was getting more and more presumptuous, touching me here and there in front of others, seemingly getting entertainment from my flustered looks.

One day, after the night's self study, the eight of us returned to our dorm room. When men gathered to talk, the topic up for discussion would definitely be about women. As they continued talking, the discussion slowly went overboard. Someone had suddenly issued a dare to Lu Feng.

"Lu Feng, why don't you do your wife once for us to see?"

Besides me, who else could Lu Feng's "wife" be?

The rest roared with laughter. My face darkened as I sat on Lu Feng's bed reading, pretending I hadn't heard a single word.

However, before I knew it, Lu Feng had replied with a short "okay" before he pushed me down on the bed, swiftly riding on my waist.

The cheers were loud enough to wake the dead. With one hand, Lu Feng skillfully pinned both of my arms down while the other unbuttoned my shirt without hesitation.

"Lu Feng! Stop fooling around!" I was getting more anxious and angrier by the minute.

Once my shirt had been completely unbuttoned, the six of them excitedly cheered again. Lu Feng was still wearing a faint smile as he explored my body with his hands. I didn't know to what extent he would fool about this time round, although I was clear he wouldn't actually do it, but to be humiliated publicly like this still made me purse my

lips firmly as I relented.

His hand was actually sliding down towards my waist to unbuckle my belt, making me go pale, "Lu Feng, you're taking this too far!"

"Lu Feng, hurry up!"

"Go for it! Haha....."

My brainless dorm mates were too slow in realising the graveness of the situation.

"Lu Feng, I'm getting angry!" I weakly flashed my trump card.

He was still tearing away at my clothes as if possessed, his hand finding its way into my pants before grasping it.

As if touched by lightning, I screamed, managing to break myself free from his hold with a surprising amount of strength before giving him a hard slap across his face.

"Son of a bitch." I was trembling as I gritted my teeth.

It was then did they realise they had taken the joke too far.

After a long silence, Xiao Shan spoke up, "Xiao Chen, don't cry. Lu Feng was just joking around."

Lu Feng was blankly looking at me, his face finally showing a hint of uneasiness.

"Get lost." I pushed him away roughly. "Get lost!"

"Xiao Chen, I was-"

"Just kidding right? Get lost, go and fool around with someone else." I used the back of my hand to wipe my tears before getting up and picking my glasses off the ground. "A young master like you can easily find someone to joke around with, so don't always take me as your clown!"

Long Way Home - Chapter 8

I stopped talking to Lu Feng.

Lu Feng was worse. Even at his age, he hadn't once learnt the spelling of the word "sorry", so how could he be the first to give in? When we had no choice but to meet at times, his face was stiffer than mine.

For a few days, I kept dreaming about Lu Feng. That arrogant fellow would suddenly have a 180 degree change in personality, gently holding my hand as he said, "Xiao Chen, I'm sorry. Please don't ignore me." I would then hold on to his shirt and bawl my eyes out. Waking up after crying halfway, I would find myself still lying on the 80cm single-sized mattress on the top bunk. Poking my head out to take a look at Lu Feng at the lower bunk, I would then find that he was still sleeping soundly.

Cheng Yi Chen, you must be dreaming.

Similar dreams kept repeating themselves, making me secretly call myself stupid every time I see Lu Feng's nonchalant face.

"Xiao Chen, don't be angry, it's all my fault."

I had enough experience this time round. "Stop comforting me, I know I'm dreaming."

As expected, I woke up in the blink of an eye, and just as I was moping, I saw Lu Feng sitting beside me, his head lowered as he looked at me with a small smile. "You're awake? Xiao Chen, let's make up."

I started crying again. "Lu Feng, I just dreamt of you speaking to me, and when I woke up, I was afraid you were going to ignore me again."

Lu Feng was smiling gently, lightly patting my head. "You're not dreaming now. Don't cry."

"Ring-..."

My eyes flew open, my heart beating wildly.

It was the school's wake up call. I sat up, wiped the sweat off my forehead, blankly started into space for a while, then quietly wore my clothes and got off the bed.

Unintentionally, I glanced at Lu Feng's bed. It was empty.

I pondered for a moment. Unable to bear my curiosity, I asked, "Lu Feng didn't return last night?"

The others had just woke up as well, and were in the midst of taking their towels and toothbrushes to wash up. Xiao Shan was looking at the mirror closely, squeezing his pimple as he said with both admiration and jealousy, "Lu Feng ah, you didn't know? He recently started dating the school's goddess and was hardly seen anywhere. I have no idea where he took that girl to last night though. That bastard's fast..."

I stood there stiffly. Only a few days have gone by and he's already gotten himself a girlfriend, going in for the kill with the speed of light. That really sounded like his style. Only a nerd like me would foolishly worry over a friend like this. That fellow Lu Feng was the true definition of easy-going; he didn't even take me seriously. His circle of friends was big anyway, so one less wouldn't matter, unlike me who took my one or two friends as treasures, actually having such a far-fetched dream in a dream. I was ridiculous.

As I thought it through, I slowly started laughing.

"What are you laughing for?"

"Nothing, nothing." I smiled widely as I waved him off.

It was a friendship that lasted for less than half a year, so it wasn't a big deal. I lowered my head to search for my toothbrush and toothpaste; my stomach felt strangely painful.

Lu Feng didn't appear for all four lessons in the morning. I didn't plan on guessing where that person was at or what he was doing and focused on writing my notes and doing practices, using the break time to finish two whole sets of math questions. My productivity level was way higher than usual, shocking my deskmate who exclaimed, "Xiao Chen, you're way too aggressive! You're basically doing these at supersonic speed..."

"The speed at which you solve the questions is very important," I said seriously,

"There are so many questions in the exams now, if you don't hurry, you won't be able to complete them." "No wonder you score 20 marks higher than me every time for Chinese..."

My deskmate murmured. The Chinese papers were always too long for most people to finish them within two hours; I was probably the only exception.

By afternoon, the lower bunk was still empty. I could no longer continue doing practice questions and instead, started counting sheep.

"403 Cheng Yi Chen, someone's calling for you!" The uncle on duty downstairs shouted.

"I'm coming, I'm coming." I ran downstairs. The only one who would call the school would be my strict father, to call at this time would mean it was an urgent, and most likely bad, matter.

"Dad!"

"Is this Cheng Yi Chen?"

"..." A young woman's voice... I was cheated.

"You are Lu Feng's close friend right?"

I didn't know how I should answer, so I gave an ambiguous "um" in reply.

"That idiotic brother of mine was stabbed for stealing someone else's girlfriend. I don't know if he's dead yet, but do help me go over and take a look at him."

Long Way Home - Chapter 9

"That idiotic brother of mine was stabbed for stealing someone else's girlfriend. I don't know if he's dead yet, but do help me go over and take a look at him."

The first thought that appeared in my mind was that she was joking. "What, what do you mean?"

"Lu Feng ah, my brother, fought with someone and was stabbed. He's lying in that small hotel beside the school. Because he's afraid of getting more demerits, he doesn't dare to go to the hospital nor go back to school. I have no time to bother myself with him, so help me out by paying him a visit. Oh right, don't ever let my father find out, or he'll chop that idiot's legs off, and..."

I asked Xiao Shan to help me take the afternoon off, and without having the time to explain, I took off hurriedly with my wallet.

Lu Feng and I used to frequent that hotel. When there was something to celebrate, for example, when I scored first on a single subject, his father would send him some money, and the two of us would go there to eat, one of us ordering wine to drink and the other juice as we sat there and chatted.

That was why we were close with the owner as well, so once he saw me, he nodded his head as a greeting. "Lu Feng's on the second floor, Room 3."

I calmed down slightly, thinking that Lu Feng's injury shouldn't be too bad. If he was bleeding profusely, the owner wouldn't be that cold-hearted to leave a body lying in the guestroom.

The door wasn't locked, just closed. My heart was pounding; I was afraid to see Lu Feng covered in blood lying in the bed without a hint of his usual spirit.

"...Lu Feng..." I pushed the door open and nervously called out in a small voice.

"Hmm?"

...That fellow who had been stabbed and should be bleeding and crying out as if he was on the verge of death was causally lying on the bed with his leg propped up while watching the television.

"....." I immediately became as quiet as a lamb, secretly wanting to stab him with a knife before leaving quietly.

"Xiao Chen?!" He was slightly taken aback by my appearance.

I got hot under the collar. "Your sister said that you were injured and asked me to

come take a look at you, but it seems that you're in the pink of health. Was that knife as thick as a needle?" How did I not think that the knife could be the small kind we used to sharpen our pencils? Damn it...

"Oh, the knife." Lu Feng smiled, and started gesturing. "It was a watermelon knife, around this long."

"Stop talking nonsense." I was getting agitated again.

Lu Feng blinked. "I'm not lying." He turned around and showed me his right arm. There was indeed a thick gauze on it with faint traces of blood. "It just didn't hit me in the chest. That damned fat ass tried to attack me from behind, but I had no time to avoid it, so I used my arm to block it instead."

I sighed in relief, albeit still a little worried. "I-Is the wound deep?"

"It's fine, my bones were unharmed." He took a look at his arm and then looked at my pale face before smiling. "Don't worry, it isn't serious. I'll be fine in a few days. I just can't go back to school for a while. I can only afford detention, not any more demerits. Father will kill me."

"As long as you're alright, then it's fine." I became uncomfortable again when he started staring at me. "Umm... your sister is pretty worried about you, so she asked me to pay you a visit... to see.. if you were.. alright."

"My sister?" He snorted. "That nosy woman. I already told her it was just a small cut at the arm. I knew she would think too much... I just asked her to transfer some money over to deal with the situation. I broke two machines in the arcade and had to pay a hefty sum, that bastard still dared to blackmail me..."

"..." In the past, we used to be able to talk nonstop together, but I could hardly find two words in reply now even after struggling. "Rest well. ...I'll help you take the next few days off when I go back...umm..."

"Huh?" He raised his eyebrows and looked at me.

"I'm leaving." Remembering the determination I had this morning, I turned to leave, ready to close the door.

"Xiao Chen."

"..."

"Since you're here, why don't you just accompany me before you leave? We haven't talked in six days."

...I guess you still have some conscience left in you to remember that it had been six days.

I slowly moved over and took a seat.

He reached over to grab my shoulder with his left hand and forcefully pulled me to his

side. "Why are you sitting so far away?"

"Is your arm still hurting?" Having nothing to reply that with, I tried finding something else to talk about.

"It's okay... It's not hurting now."

"Of course," I said coldly. "even becoming a ghost would be an honour if you were to die for someone so pretty. It's the school goddess after all, getting stabbed by a knife for her would be nothing."

"I feel that getting stabbed was worth it too." He was honest.

I was furious, turning my head to avoid looking at him. "Be careful in the future. Don't wave goodbye to your life by pretending to be all heroic for some beauty."

He chuckled.

I was getting more frustrated, so I stood up. "Let that campus belle take care of you instead, I'm leaving."

"Xiao Chen," he suddenly questioned, "are you jealous?"

"Are you crazy?" As if I had been caught redhanded, I jumped and pointed at him. "What you do with others is none of my business! It's not like I'm anyone special to you!"

He smiled, suddenly pulling me with an extended hand, causing me to land right in his lap.

"What's wrong with you?" I shoved the arm wrapped around my waist away in embarrassment. "I'm not a woman, stop touching me."

"Xiao Chen, I really think that this wound was worth it."

"I know I know, stop being a lovesick fool." I was annoyed. "Go away, don't get so close to me."

"If I wasn't injured, you wouldn't have come to look for me, would you?"

I paused, taking in what he had said before finally understanding. My face was heating up. "We're friends after all. If you die, I have to at the very least attend your funeral."

"Hey...don't show this kind of expression. It makes me feel like kissing you."

"You must have gone mad from thinking about women." I slapped his hand away. "Let me go. Don't you find a man sitting in your lap disgusting?"

That thick-skinned fellow tightly hugged me; I could feel his soft and warm breath on the crown of my head. I unknowingly tensed up, and without knowing the reason why, I lowered my head, afraid to meet his eyes.

"Xiao Chen, let me see your face, I have something to say to you."

"Hmm?" I looked up, unguarded.

My vision went blur. I could feel something soft and warm on my lips.

My mind went blank.

With one hand supporting my head, he kissed me passionately, his tongue slipping in, fighting against my clenched teeth. Recovering slightly from the shock, I had the chance to resist, but my jaw somehow gave way, granting him complete entrance. Once his tongue touched mine, I could feel the energy drained out of me, allowing myself to lie helplessly in his arms. Lu Feng's tongue was warm and fierce, the strength he used as he ferociously sucked on my bottom lip was enough to make me feel a stinging sensation. As the kiss got longer, it got deeper, leaving me breathless.

Lu Feng suddenly released me and patted my pale face. "Idiot, breathe!" I finally started taking in deep breaths of air, shivering slightly while doing so.

"You fool, you can breathe all the same when you're kissing."

I was panting for quite some time before my heart calmed itself down. "Lu Feng... This isn't right..."

"Hmm?" He cupped my face and met my eyes.

"This isn't right," I stuttered, "It isn't right... I'm a man... This...is wrong..."

"Shh..." Lu Feng hastily put a finger to his lips.

I remained silent, nervously looking at him.

"I like you." His expression and tone weren't laced with any confusion.

"But-"

Once I opened my mouth, his lips immediately cut me off.

This time, I was long gone before I could show the slightest resistance.

Long Way Home - Chapter 10

Lu Feng told me to look for him again after I had thought things through.

I couldn't think straight, so I didn't visit him again for a long time. I really wasn't running away from the matter, you guys have to believe me on this.

My attempts at doing some practice questions failed terribly, and for the English comprehension which I usually got full marks on, I got five questions wrong yesterday. I was heavily affected by this, dejectedly sitting down to evaluate what exactly had resulted in my sudden drop academically. Was it the lack of sleep that had affected my brain power? My bad mood that had resulted in a decreased analysis ability? Or was it

the pollution in the air that severely caused a lack of oxygen in everyone's brains?

It had nothing to do with that person, absolutely nothing at all.

"Lu Feng, you're back!" Someone at the corridor loudly greeted.

I was scared stiff, looking around frantically for a place to hide. The closet? The box? The drawers?

As my thoughts ran wild, the door was pushed open with a loud bang. I immediately resumed my position and pretended that I was doing my work.

"Xiao Chen, I'm back." His voice sounded cheerful.

"Oh, um." I buried myself in the books and busily scribbled something, pretending I was too busy to even look up.

"Are you busy doing homework?"

"Um, yes."

"Then I won't bother you then."

"Um, okay." I inwardly let out a sigh of relief.

"Xiao Chen, your book's upside down."

"What?" I hurriedly flipped the book over. Looking at it again, huh? It's flipped... That meant I didn't hold it the wrong way round before.

The smile on Lu Feng's face disappeared. He placed his bag down and sat at the edge of the bed. "Come here."

I bit on my lower lip as I slowly made my way over.

"Sit down."

I obediently followed.

He habitually placed his arms over my shoulder, shocking me as I shrunk in my seat.

"You're afraid of me?!"

Frightened, I shook my head vigorously.

Lu Feng furrowed his brows and grabbed me, making me face him. "Look at me. I'll ask you some questions, and all you have to do is answer yes or no."

I stared straight at him, not daring to move an inch.

"About what happened that day, do you feel disgusted?"

I shook my head.

"Are you happy being with me?" A nod.

"Are you happy that I have a girlfriend?" I shook my head.

"Were you worried when I was injured?" A nod.

"You like being around me, don't you?" A nod.

"You like being around me the most, don't you?" A nod.

He showed an extremely satisfied expression, his voice softening, "Then, did you feel comfortable kissing me?"

I blushed a deep red.

"Say the truth."

After a long pause, I nodded my head slowly.

"That means... You like me too?"

After another long struggle, I finally nodded again.

"Then that's all that matters."

"Lu Feng," I awkwardly started, "I'm a man."

"Bullshit, anyone could see that."

"A man liking another man... That's... weird."

"Are you saying I'm weird?"

"No, no..." I stuttered out, "You're fine... But we're both males..."

"Stop saying nonsense." He impatiently grabbed my jaw. "We both like each other. So let's just get together, you don't have to care about so much."

"Wh-who said I liked you?" Can you not make such strange conclusions?

He immediately lowered his head in search for my lips.

"No...Mm-"

"I like you, what's so wrong with that?" He said as his lips moved closer to my ear.

There is, in fact, nothing wrong with that. That is why in the end, I didn't push him away.

Long Way Home - Chapter 11 (M)

Disregarding ethics, Lu Feng and I were really happy being together.

The fear of being discriminated for being in a same-sex relationship was still incomparable to the strong attraction I felt towards him. Under the cover of the night and shadows casted by trees, we secretly kissed. When the lights went out, we would hide on his bed and speak in hushed tones while we caressed the other. A secret love like this was the easiest kind to grow fierce and strong, till to the point of it being unstoppable. Even when we were in a large crowd, our eyes carried the same passion when we looked at each other.

The two-month long summer break made me miss Lu Feng more than ever before. I was dreaming about him almost every night, as to what my dream was about... It's better not to talk about it or I might just make a spectacle of myself.

As my emotions built up, I found myself waking up to find my lower body in a wet and sticky state one midnight.

My body developed slower than others, so this had never happened before. Although I was clear on what that was, the fact that the person in my dreams was a man called Lu Feng made me extremely flustered.

The next day, when Lu Feng called at night, I shut myself in the room and told him about it honestly. That precocious fellow was laughing as he listened, making me embarrassed and eventually angry. "What are you laughing for, it's your fault for coming into my dreams and doing this and that to me..."

"What did I do to you?"

"...What else can you do besides acting like a hooligan?" I was angry and frustrated.

"Oh, right, right, I'm a hooligan." He evilly laughed for some time before his voice took on a deeper tone. "Xiao Chen, I want you now."

My face reddened. "...If you continue, I'm going to call the police."

"Be good, let me hug you for a while."

"Sure sure sure, I'll let you." Since they were just empty words, I generously agreed.

"I'm touching your waist... mmh, it seems that you've grown thinner."

Even though I knew he was making this up, I could feel myself going numb. "...It's summer, I would obviously lose some weight..."

"I'm going to touch your face now, it has grown thinner too... Your lips... Don't bite on your lips, loosen your jaw, I want to put my finger in..."

I silently listened, my heartbeat growing erratic.

"I'm... going to kiss you."

I shivered.

Following Lu Feng's words, I unconsciously started exploring myself with my right hand, imagining it to be Lu Feng's warm and rough hands, all the way till I reached the spot in between my thighs.

.....

"Is it comfortable?"

I panted heavily as I looked at the white fluid in my hand, a bittersweet embarrassment filling me.

"How shy... Your first time?"

"Yes." My face flushed red again.

Lu Feng remained silent for a while, his breathing becoming more and more labored. I bit hard on my lips as I held the telephone, guessing if he was doing the same thing I just did, unknowingly feeling a rush of excitement again.

I waited till he caught his breath, then brazenly questioned, "Comfortable?"

He laughed. "Of course, it would obviously be comfortable doing it with Xiao Chen."

"Shameless." This insatiable bastard.

Laughing for a moment, Lu Feng then suddenly said, "Cheng Yi Chen, I love you."

I finally realised many years later that this unromantic confession in which Lu Feng used my full name in was more sincere and precious than any other honeyed words. That summer, I celebrated my 14th birthday. The years before, I had been as pure as snow; a blank piece of white paper. Every little mark imprinted on me was made by Lu Feng thereafter.

When school was about to reopen again, we agreed on going back two days earlier (Yi Chen had already lost all hopes for this older brother who chooses his friends over him). Lu Feng had gone somewhere and tanned himself charcoal black. In comparison, I stayed at home studying and was no different from the skin colour of a boiled chicken. Lu Feng was very proud of his new skin tone. "I spent so much time in Hawaii to get this tan, you dare to not like it?"

I sneered. But it was true that Lu Feng looked even more dashing and charming like this, so I secretly swallowed my saliva when he wasn't looking.

"Come here, I'll let you test the strength of my arms." Lu Feng proudly flexed his muscular arms. "They're only going to be used for you."

I snorted. "Nobody wants that piece of bamboo."

The aforementioned arms that looked like pieces of "bamboo" then easily picked me up and threw me on the bed. Seeing that he looked like he was about to start aggressively kissing me, I shouted for help.

Lu Feng was laughing. "Before you start shouting for help, can you let go of my neck?" "Get lost!" I was feeling both embarrassed and angry for the nth time after being exposed.

We had two days to ourselves, and once the door to the dorm was closed, we huddled together without any worries. Strictly speaking, the love between us was still pure then, having stopped at the level of kissing only. We hadn't even helped relieve the other with our hands yet. I wasn't clear about Lu Feng's thoughts, but as for me, at that age, talking about this was too early, and as for the last step... I was terrified by the thought.

The two of us lay shirtless together chatting, kissing at times. The Lu Feng now was more charming than anyone else in my eyes. I always felt that the fact that this kind of manly man would prefer a stick-thin and ordinary boy like me over women was harder to comprehend than any one of Mum's dishes. I happily let my hands roam free, touching the muscular chest I envied.

"Done touching? That's a total of three hundred dollars please."

"You're really cheap."

"That's because you're a VIP, so I gave you a discount. Don't be ungrateful."

"I'm an old customer, give me more discounts, buy one free one." I cheekily smiled, allowing my hands to go wild.

Lu Feng grabbed my hands, his expression serious. "If you continue touching me like this, I'm really going to start acting like a hooligan."

"Don't say it like you've never acted like one before."

Lu Feng sneakily smiled. "I'll let you see what a real hooligan's like then."

With a forceful tug at my waist, I became... the one on top.

I burst out into laughter. "So being a hooligan means that you're the one that's pinned down eh?"

Lu Feng successfully cut off my laughter with a swift movement, pressing my head down against him. Lying on him, I could hear that young and powerful heart beating as quickly as mine, and at the thought that it was because of me, I shivered in excitement.

When our tongues intertwined, the hand on my waist slowly slid off. Acutely aware of the thin piece of cloth that separated us, he gently rubbed his hips against mine. I paused, tensing up when I felt his expanding desire pressing against my lower

abdomen.

Once his hands reached in, I started breathing heavily. My cotton shorts were taken off, followed by my underwear. I hugged him tightly, not daring to move. This kind of situation was a first for there were no barriers in between us; I was feeling electrified. Lu Feng tightly hugged me as well, slowly rubbing himself against me, both hands wildly running free below my waist. It was originally a situation in which a touch could have set us off, so these simple motions easily brought him to his climax. What Lu Feng left on me was sticky and wet, so when we quietly remained hugging, we were both slightly embarrassed. After a long time, Lu Feng made me sit up with him, allowing me to rest my back against his chest, his hand reaching to the front to touch me.

Lu Feng was my first love, so I could not judge whether his skills were good or bad. However, he definitely could easily make me excited, so it wasn't long before I became a complete mess.

"You're weak." He snickered. "Thankfully, I'll be the husband in the future. If not, you wouldn't be able to satisfy me."

"I was afraid your hand was getting tired, that's why I made it fast!" I retorted.

"How was it?"

"How was what?"

"As compared to doing it yourself, how was it?"

"..." I flushed bright red. "Just a little bit better."

"Heh..." He proudly smiled, tightly hugging me from behind.

"Hey..."

"Hmm?"

"Why are you...!!"

He was slightly embarrassed. "One would of course have certain thoughts when hugging one's wife."

"...I'll help you with it."

"There's no need," he said generously. "I'm afraid your tactless motions will make me disabled."

"I'll do that right now then!" My counterattack was stopped midway, and although I had seen this coming, his rough and warm touch still managed to make my heart beat faster, giving me goosebumps.

"If it hurts, let me know," I reminded him and with the little confidence I had, I started clumsily.

Just as I was working hard, Lu Feng suddenly laughed. "Please, can you not use the expression you had when you were eating fries at KFC?"

"Shut up!" I fiercely said, "I'm trying my best to please you. Stop complaining!"

I knew it was out of place to be as serious as I was when doing analysis questions, but.. when you love someone, you would want that person to be happy, and that was a serious matter in itself.

Lu Feng was no longer laughing, silently lowering his head to look at how I was doing. As he got closer, he pinched my jaw open harshly and kissed me. My mind went blank and my limbs were rendered useless once again when he started toying with my tongue.

"Don't stop," he whispered into my lips. I replied a short "oh" before continuing awkwardly. My skills were really terrible, especially when I was in the middle of a kiss like this where I could no longer feel how hard or fast I was going. He still reached his climax, getting the white fluid on the both of us.

Lu Feng used a soft towel to wipe me clean, then firmly pulled me into a hug.

"Xiao Chen, do you love me?"

I vigorously nodded my head.

"We'll be really happy together right?"

I nodded again.

"Let's stay together forever, okay?"

I desperately nodded.

And although it was a happy moment, I buried my face in his chest and cried miserably. Nobody knew why.

Sometimes, misfortune spreads its wings like a big bird, no matter how far it is, the shadow it casts will always be just as clear and real.

Long Way Home - Chapter 12

Ever since Lu Feng and I got together, our "rankings" had been made clearer. Every time the ranks were released, he would feel terribly ashamed. I gleefully looked at the two names on the list that were miles apart while Lu Feng went "It's all because you took all my energy away."

...Shameless.

Our form teacher saw that we were rather close, specially finding me to talk specifically about two points: 1. I've got to know how to maintain my grades well lest I get dragged down by Lu Feng. 2. Friends should help one another, so being the one doing better, I should do my best to help the one that was doing worst.

Using this as a reason, the two of us could openly sit closely together during self-study, our heads, arms and legs touching the other's like conjoined twins.

"You have an American mom after all, so why is your English only of this standard?"

"I know how to speak, but I can't write it." He unhappily flapped the exam paper covered in crosses in his hands. "Furthermore, even if you gave this kind of paper to my mom, she might not have passed as well. Look at these questions, they're obviously just trying to make things hard for us. It's like going out to the streets to question a random Chinese what's the difference* between "answering to" and "explaining", I'll see if he can answer that."

That fellow's ability in making up lame arguments and changing the topic was indeed high. After two or three sentences, I was lost, only after chatting for a while then did I realise that I had duties to be carried out.

I helplessly said, "Lu Feng, our teacher asked me to come here to help you."

He smiled evilly, no doubt thinking about something dirty. "Help me then."

Honestly, we hadn't touched each other for quite some time. There were too many eyes in the dorm and the classroom, so we didn't dare do much. The most we did was during "tutoring time" where our hands would intertwine under the table, making us thoroughly familiar with the other's hands. He would always use his thumb to caress my hands gently and slowly, starting from my palm to my fingertips. It was such a secretive yet intimate action, so once I got used to it, I could never forget what it felt like. Having suppressed our sexual desires for too long, the way we looked at each other was as if we could never eat till we were full nor be able to wear enough clothes to be warm. There was one time, during the usual self-study period so the corridors were empty, where he had just received a scolding and was walking out of the teacher's staff room with a face that suggested he couldn't care less when that daring fellow grabbed me and pulled me into a long kiss.

The result was us having to awkwardly squat to pick up the scattered papers on the ground and still missing three of them after a long while.

On Saturday morning, I woke up and went about with my usual routine, standing beside Lu Feng's bed and bending down to wear my shoes before I was surprised by his hug from behind. I didn't dare make too much noise, so I just lightly patted his hands to signal to him not to fool around as there were people who were already waking up.

Lu Feng tightened his hug. "Don't go out and read anymore, stay in the dorm with me."

"Doesn't Fatty stay cooped up in the dorm all day long?" I added, "What can we do in front of him?"

"Xiao Chen, how about going to my house?"

"Huh? To meet my in-laws?"

His Chinese was horrible. He couldn't even differentiate between the words "grandparents" and "in-laws".

"No... My father's in America, there isn't anyone at home."

Although his tone hinted at something which made me go red, the temptation of being alone together won over. I took out all the notes and textbooks in my bag and brought an empty one in order to not raise suspicions. Lu Feng simply shoved his wallet and keys into his pocket before walking out empty-handed.

Lu Feng's house was only about an hour and a half's drive away via the expressway. This meant that before the gates closed at 11pm on Sunday, we still had thirty-seven hours of free time.

Thirty-seven hours wasn't long enough, so we couldn't waste a single second. Before the door was even fully closed, we smashed our lips together, but having used too much strength, our teeth clashed, inciting a cry of pain from me as I held on to my jaw, feeling a little embarrassed.

"That won't do. Let's try it again."

I didn't even have the time to smile before I was forcefully kissed again. Ah... He's biting... If he's this fierce, my lips might break soon... Hey, don't suck... No, I'm getting dizzy again...

"Let's go into my room." Lu Feng's voice was low, his breathing becoming uneven.

"What for?"

"Nothing... Just go in and take a look..."

At first, I was really just looking around, but unknowingly, we had ended up on the bed.

"You're really heavy, don't lie on me... You're going to squeeze the air out of me, I can't breathe..."

"Don't worry, I can help you do CPR..."

...

"No... Let go, ah-"

"Want to try it again?"

"If you're human, you'll need a rest don't you? How can you go on for the whole day without stopping?"

"I can, come here..."

"...I'm hungry..."

"Let's order some food. ...We'll continue after we eat."

"..."

Disregarding my pride as a man, I have to admit that my energy and thirst was no match for that young, enthusiastic and passionate fellow whose needs go beyond most people.

"I'm not playing anymore." I tiredly lay dead on the velvet sheets.

"You're useless." Lu Feng looked at my pale face. "You just wasted dinner."

"An intellect like me works mainly with my brain, I can't do physically exhausting tasks like these."

"You call this physically exhausting? Is my... too heavy?"

"Even if you're dirty-minded, there should be a limit... Hey, don't fool around... I'm really tired..."

"Just once more."

I gritted my teeth. "Do it yourself! My hands are about to break! I might just need to use my legs to write in the future..."

"Your hands are sore? Poor you." Hypocrite, who was the cause of this?

Under the blankets, as he massaged my hands skillfully, I got more comfortable, forgetting momentarily that I was supposed to be mad at him.

"Xiao Chen."

"Hmm?" My palm, my wrist, and then my arm... Nice... Use a little more force... I relaxed, ready to fall asleep like this.

"I want you."

"It's not like we haven't done it before." I asked him confusedly, "Why are you suddenly so polite?"

"Not the way we did it in the past." He smiled. "I want to hug you."

"..." I blankly opened one eye. "Hug... How do you want to hug?"

I had always thought that the most one could do was use his mouth.

Translator's note: *the words here in Chinese have really similar meanings and pronunciation, "交代 jiāo dài" and "交待 jiāo dài" respectively

Long Way Home - Chapter 13 (M)

T/W: Rape/Non-consensual sex

"Not the way we did it in the past." He smiled. "I want to hug you."

"..." I blankly opened one eye. "Hug... How do you want to hug?"

I had always thought that the most one could do was use his mouth.

"I'll teach you." When Lu Feng wanted to mesmerise others into doing something, his kissing skills were amazing.

Just as I was kissed till I was unable to think straight, I felt an unexpected sharp pain there.

"Ouch!" I struggled in shock, unprepared for the pain. "What is that? It's really painful... Get it out..."

"Don't be afraid." He laughed mysteriously. "It's just the fingers now."

I finally understood what he meant. "No, no... I don't want this, get it out..."

"Don't worry, it won't hurt once we use some lubricant. I'll go slow."

"No!" I firmly said, "I don't want this at all... I'm not doing it, let go."

I was still a man who didn't lack anything, so who would be willing to be... entered.

Thinking about it, to allow something of that size to enter when it wasn't built to was terrifying...

"Xiao Chen." Lu Feng slowly knitted his brows together.

I could tell he was getting upset, so I tried making up for it. "Let's talk about this another day... For today, I'll just help you with my mouth okay?" I was really terrified. That way of making love was no different from killing someone.

"What are you afraid of?"

"I..." How would I not be scared, if you were in my position, I'll see you try saying that you're not afraid.

Lu Feng forcefully pressed me down, cutting me off with his lips, his big hands traveling down my back, his fingers trying to force their way in.

"Don't..." I anxiously turned away. "Let's do this another time okay? Give me some time to prepare myself..."

"Stop talking nonsense." He impatiently said, his grip not in the least bit loose. My body went still once he inserted a finger. I tried my best in restraining myself from pushing him away.

He added another finger, by then, my tears were ready to fall. "Don't do this Lu Feng, I can't... It really hurts."

"It's going to be alright, just bear with it for a while."

I bit on my lips and stopped speaking.

How could it be... alright.

A cold sensation, he had squeezed some lube in. The supposed lubricant didn't even help besides providing the chilly sensation.

My legs were awkwardly folded to my chest.

I was no different from a puppet, passive and stiff.

How was this any different from rape?

I unnaturally turned my head over, avoiding eye contact with him. I could feel it pressing against me, the fear I felt was akin to the kind I felt when I was still afraid of injections as a child, the dread filling me was the same as the one I felt in the hospital after they applied the alcohol while I awaited the pain.

With just a little force, he pushed it in. It was already hurting to the point that I was trembling. No... It can't fit at all... This way of making love that lacked communication and sensitivity was not what I wanted at all...

He pushed in a little more. I could no longer take it and started protesting. "Stop! Stop, stop! Lu Feng..."

"What's wrong with you?" He wasn't having a good time holding in his anger either, his expression impatient as he used even more strength in pinning my legs down.

"Don't!!" The pain was blinding. I wildly started hitting him.

"Stop being so troublesome!"

He was obviously angry.

I took a deep breath and kept quiet, stopping.

The supposed wonder, the supposed happiness, the supposed admiration, they were all lies. "I like you", "I'll take care of you"... they too, were all lies.

In, out, in, out... I could only feel two things, one, pain. The other, pain.

I dazedly stared at the ceiling.

After the various levels of torture and pain was finally over, Lu Feng then backed away, satisfied, panting hard as he lay beside me, one arm still on my waist.

I lay stunned for a while, then realised that my first experience at doing this with another man was completed like this. I turned to look at Lu Feng, his eyes were closed lazily. He didn't realise...that I...hadn't even got excited.

I turned myself over so that my back was facing him and buried my face in the pillow, hoping to get some sleep.

"What is it?"

I silently shook my head.

"Why aren't you speaking?"

"..." What do you want me to say? Where would I find the energy to talk to you now?

"You're not happy?" His tone hardened.

"No." I slowly said.

"Then why?"

"..."

"You're not happy about what happened just now?" He reached over and made me turn to face him, slightly angered. "You're not willing to have sex with me?"

"No, it's not that." I forced myself to perk up. I like him, I don't want to fight with him, I don't want him to be mad at me.

Lu Feng coldly glared at me. "If you feel that you were raped, you can go to the police."

I froze up.

"Look at yourself in the mirror, what kind of expression is that?!" Lu Feng sat straight up. "If you're that unwilling to have sex with me, then there's no point in us being together!"

The air immediately turned cold.

Only twelve hours had passed out of the precious seconds and minutes that we had, the thirty-seven hours that we had to ourselves.

The remaining hours seemed too long to bear.

I hesitantly spoke, "How about... I think, I should go back to school first..."

"Your choice." He didn't even turn to look.

I could only get up and wear my clothes, go into the living room to find my bag before throwing the door open.

The pain was hard to bear as it hurt whenever I moved. Walking from Lu Feng's mansion to the bus station just about killed me. After going through my bag for a while in front of the ticket counter, I then realised I didn't bring enough money.

I forlornly moved to a corner and sat down. It was a little cold, so I wrapped my arms around myself tightly.

I would rather die than go back to borrow some money from Lu Feng.

I had no money, so I couldn't take a bus back. I was at a complete loss as to what I should do.

Why can't he understand my feelings? After all, I am still a man. I like him, but I still have my pride as a man. Why can't he let me think it through for a while, let me hesitate before I throw away that last bit of pride for him?

He got so upset when I hesitated.

Who would... chase their lover out on a winter night right after they made love.

I wiped my tears, rubbing my legs for warmth. There weren't many people at such a late hour, so the lady at the ticket counter kept observing me curiously.

What was so strange about this, haven't you seen... a man cry?

I sniffled and lowered my head. It was really cold.

Long Way Home - Chapter 14

Someone hurriedly rushed in.

"I need a ticket for the next ride to XX!" He was breathing anxiously, his tone impatient.

I raised my head to look at the person standing by the ticket counter in shock.

"Do you want the one at 10:40pm?"

"40..." He turned his head to look at the big clock on the wall, but instead, his eyes met mine.

"Never mind."

Seeing that he was slowly making his way over, I instinctively wrapped my legs into my chest a little tighter.

"What are you sitting here for instead of going back?" He was expressionless.

"I don't have enough...money." I felt pathetic.

Lu Feng's expression turned cold immediately. "So you would rather sit here till the next morning than go back and find me? Do you really see me as a rapist now?"

I furiously stood up and grabbed my bag, ready to leave, only to be grabbed by my arm.

"Where are you going?"

"You don't have to worry about me!" I was choking up. "You don't even care about what I think anyway..."

The lady at the ticket counter curiously looked over. Lu Feng firmly dragged me by my wrist out of the bus station.

"Go home with me!"

"No!"

He gritted his teeth and glared at me. "Are you going back or not?"

"I'm not going back with you!" The emotions that had built up in me through the night broke free as I blindly hit him. "Go away! You bastard, saying lies like "I like you, I love you", you only care about yourself... You have never thought about my feelings! You've never asked me what I felt... That's right, it was hard for me to bear, I was unwilling. I was perfectly fine, so why did I have to become gay? Why do I have to be topped by someone else when I'm a perfectly normal man? If I didn't like you, why would I put up with it... why... would I become... a... pervert..."

There was no one else there. In the middle of the empty road, I burst out crying.

He...never realised how much pressure I had to endure for this relationship. How would he understand what the word "homosexual" meant to a normal 14-year old? I was so afraid that people would start calling me a pervert, afraid that I would be hated and cursed at, afraid of my conservative parents and brother, afraid that... I would get AIDS... afraid that I wouldn't be able to live peacefully in this world. Has he ever thought about these for me?

I was different from him. He was Lu Feng, and I was Cheng Yi Chen. The strictest and most conservative family produced the weakest man.

How could I be that courageous? If it wasn't because I loved him... if it wasn't because... I wanted to stay by his side...

I mumbled on incoherently as I cried until Lu Feng pulled me into his arms, silencing me.

"Don't be afraid." My head was pressed against his chest, hearing his heavy heart beating inside. His pronunciation was a little off; his tongue must have been bitten by me hard when I was retaliating. "I'm here, so there's nothing to be afraid of."

He was lying.

But... I was willing to believe this lie forever.

"Go back with me, okay?"

I lowered my head. My eyes were swollen.

"It hurts when you walk, doesn't it? I'll carry you." Lu Feng always carried me with ease, treating me like a haversack. However, this time, he walked slowly and steadily. I lay on his wide and sturdy back, faintly seeing the left side of his charming face. I suddenly felt really tired, but at the same time, at peace.

"Xiao Chen."

I silently listened.

"Anyone would wish to do that with someone they like, and that goes for me too... I... couldn't resist. I was really happy to have done it with you... and I had hoped you would be as happy as me too. ...But seeing your reaction..."

"But... I'm sorry." Lu Feng seemed to be stuttering. "...I love you."

He slightly moved his head to the right as if he was feeling shy.

"I don't want to force you, nor hurt you. I just... like you too much, that's why I did that..." After staying quiet for a while, he frustratedly shook his head. "Damn it... I'm not good at talking, just take it that you never heard anything."

I placed my head on his shoulder, hugging his neck even more tightly.

Lu Feng carried me on his back, walking slowly on the road in the quiet and gentle night. His back was warm, and whenever a gust of wind blew by, unknown insects of the night would bravely sing in a thin voice, "Cheep-chip, cheep-chip..."

This later became a memory that constantly reappeared in my dreams when I felt lonely.

Long Way Home - Chapter 15

Thinking about it now, we were really in love back then. It was just that at such a young age, we couldn't carry the weight of the consequences of our relationship. That was why it always felt unstable and worrisome. We didn't know how we could keep this going forever. We had already done everything we could, including sex, but we needed something as a promise that this could go on, and even if it was something abstract, it was at least a form of comfort.

The young female teacher that taught us English was a Christian, so her wedding was held at the church near our school. The students were all excited to see the fiery lady wearing her wedding dress as she walked down the aisle shyly. There was a huge amount of people who went to see the wedding; the church could hardly fit us all. Lu Feng took his time while preparing, so we could only stand beside the door to watch the wedding take place.

Since no one would notice the two of us standing at the very back, Lu Feng secretly held my hand. Every time we held hands, we would lock our fingers together, our palms touching.

In the past, I had never realised how beautiful the language of the hand was. The temperature of our palms, the strength of our fingers, the way in which our palms were folded, these could express everything. Because we had to hide and suppress our feelings, our love was of much greater depth and sensitivity as compared to normal lovers.

"Mr. XXX, are you willing to take Miss XXX to be your wife?"

Lu Feng squeezed my hand and softly said, "I do."

I answered in unison with the bride, "I do."

Although it seemed ridiculous, we were both serious.

Lu Feng held my hand even more tightly.

We knew we wouldn't be able to have our own wedding, so we were just stealing a small bit of someone else's happiness.

The bride and the groom exchanged rings. We didn't have anything like that, so Lu Feng simply continued stroking my ring finger. The strength he put into it almost made me cry.

Everything happened so quickly that no one was prepared for it.

The highly praised greening project at T Secondary provided a good cover for many young couples. Hence, although it was prohibited, there were many young couples here.

When the weather had become warmer, Lu Feng secretly dragged me out to the field at night, looking for a big and thick tree which casted a bigger shadow and a spot with plenty of flowers and bushes before sitting down.

"Umm," the usually straightforward Lu Feng was uncharacteristically mumbling, "I have something to give you."

He searched his coat pockets, his face trying to maintain a cool expression, but a flash of worry still appeared when he took his hands out of his pockets.

"What is it?"

"It isn't anything nice." He was trying his best to appear calm. "It wasn't worth much... You can take a look at it. If you don't like it, it's fine."

I stared at him. "How do I see what it is if you're gripping it so tightly?"

Lu Feng gave an "oh" in reply and quickly opened his fist. His rare discomfort and lack of confidence was interesting. I bent over to take a look. Under the dim lights, I could see two silver rings resting in his palm.

Lu Feng cleared his throat. "It's just silver, so it's slightly cheap. If you like it, you can pick one."

Seeing that I had no visible reaction, he coughed again, his tone nonchalant. "If you don't like it, it's fine. I just bought it for fun. I also find the style too old-fashioned. The silversmith's eyes and skills are so poor, his brain wasn't good either. I had to tell him multiple times over to make two rings suited for males before he understood, how useless..."

After talking by himself for a while and seeing that I was still not responding, Lu Feng awkwardly shut his mouth and retracted his hand.

"Lu Feng," I softly whispered.

"Hmm?" I could tell he wasn't happy.

I hugged his waist and buried myself in his chest.

I didn't want him to see my ugly face while crying.

"What is it?" His tone softened as he stroked my head.

"I love you."

He paused for a moment, then touched my wet face. "Idiot, what are you crying for?" He

awkwardly cupped my face, attempting to lift it up. "How ugly, are you still a man?"

My shoulders continued twitching, unable to stop.

"Crying just like a fool." Lu Feng placed his forehead against mine to meet my eyes. "How silly. I like you... I like you Cheng Yi Chen... Lu Feng loves Cheng Yi Chen... so what are you crying for? I like you so much..."

The ring fit perfectly, its touch cold. I tightly held on to my ring finger. "Lu Feng, if the day comes where you no longer like me, don't ever take this ring back. I can pay you, but you can't ever take it away..."

Before I could finish, he firmly pressed his lips against mine.

I clenched my teeth, still sniffing and trembling.

"Idiot, why are you still crying? Don't clench your teeth that tightly together..." he slowly coaxed, "Why would I not like you... I just want to be with you everyday..."

I clung on to his arms, unwilling to let go. No one else would ever be able to give me a kiss this passionate in the future.

When the blinding light from the torchlight hit us, I didn't even have the time to scream before Lu Feng firmly pulled me into his arms.

Long Way Home - Chapter 16

When the blinding light from the torchlight hit us, I didn't even have the time to scream before Lu Feng firmly pulled me into his arms.

"Another pair!" The discipline master sounded immensely pleased with himself. "How outrageous! High schoolers nowadays are all coming to school to date instead of studying! How are you guys going to make it to university?"

My heart was pounding hard, my hands and legs have long gone cold.

"Lu Feng, move your hand away, there's no use blocking. Even if you continue doing so, both of you will still be reported in the end!"

Lu Feng was still trying hard to shield my face. "It's not his* fault, I was the one who forced him... Just give me another demerit."

The words "he" and "she" in Chinese, were so very ambiguous and amazing.

The discipline master was obviously angered. "What are you acting like a hero for? This female student here, look up! How many times have we said that high schoolers aren't allowed to date? Look up!"

Lu Feng stubbornly shielded me with his arms, the way he protected me as if he was going to fight till his death made me feel terrible.

My face was still eventually exposed under the piercing lights of the flashlight. Everything became dead silent.

If I was in the mood to appreciate something, the discipline master's expression was actually rather amusing.

As to how Lu Feng and I were going to be punished, the decision wasn't made immediately. That was because they never had such a case before, nor anything that suggested what kind of punishment they should give for a relationship between two males in school. My old-fashioned teachers were finally faced with a problem they had never faced before.

No matter how open-minded or indifferent we were, we couldn't laugh at this. Informing our parents was no doubt one of the necessary procedures, as to what Lu Feng's father would do with him, I didn't know, but my father would definitely not spare me. Before our parents hurried over to the school upon notice, they had no idea where to place the two of us. Leaving us in the boys' dorms would cause panic, and the girls' dorms were definitely out of the question. In the midst of all the confusion, Lu Feng easily dragged me out of school.

We found a bar and went in to take a rest. Lu Feng silently drank his beer, one hand still holding mine. We were both shaken by this sudden disaster, but he was still slightly stronger than me when it came to this.

"I won't let you get expelled." When he said these words, his expression was so peaceful and optimistic. "If they ask, just say that I was the one who forced you into this. I can just transfer to another school. If I have the chance, I can still sneak out to see you. It's going to be alright, we just have to endure for another year and a half. Once we get into university, we can perhaps be together again."

I knew he was just comforting me, but who would bear to expose these lies at a moment like this?

"Don't cry, as long as I'm not beaten to death by my father, we'll still have a chance to meet, don't we?"

I wiped my tears away and tried my best to show a smile of utmost trust.

"Tsk, isn't this Lu Feng? Don't you find it disgusting holding hands with a man?"

Lu Feng cast a hateful look as he looked up to see the person who spoke, at the same time, discovering the many people behind him.

I recognised this person. He was the boss of K High School, his name was Yang Wei, a name that was as ridiculous as the person himself.

"What's with that look? Not happy? If you want to fight, then bring it on, disgusting gay, you think I'm scared of you?"

I heard a crack from Lu Feng's fingers.

If it was one on one, he would have easily lost his teeth challenging Lu Feng like that. Today, with a large number backing him up, he was spitting all kinds of nonsense.

"Lu Feng, let's go." I guessed he understood me. The situation we were in was already sticky enough, if we add another record by getting into a brawl, it'll only make things worse.

Yang Wei took a good look at me, his gaze sleazy. "Lu Feng, this is the boy you're playing with? He's so thin, how is he any fun? Which part of him do you play with? His butthole?"

I didn't manage to hold Lu Feng back before he harshly punched the man. Yang Wei's face dramatically bounced twice at the impact before blood splashed out.

"Well, well! You've got nerves," Yang Wei grimaced in pain, signaling with his hands.

"The few of you, send him to his death!"

The rest of the customers in the bar had long scattered, the boss was nowhere to be found too. A gang of people surrounded Lu Feng, beating and kicking him. I didn't know how to fight, so I couldn't help him, making me go crazy with anxiety. After struggling uselessly for a while, I spotted the telephone on the bar table and quickly ran over.

"Thinking of calling the police? They're of no use even if you call." A hand pressed my wrist down; it was Yang Wei. "You seem to really have a thing for him. Did Lu Feng play with you so much that it made you feel good? Are you addicted?"

"Bullshit!" It was the first time I had used such a vulgar word on someone. Yang Wei's expression changed, forcefully grabbing me. "Let's see how stubborn you can be once I've stripped you bare!"

"You pervert!"

"I would love to see what makes you different from other men, could it be that you're a

transvestite? If Lu Feng can play, why can't I?"

"Get lost!" I started panicking when my shirt was pulled open. "Get lost, let go... Bastard, let go!"

He was smiling smugly, his hands reaching for my pants.

"Lu Feng, Lu Feng!!" I was struggling for my life. "I don't want this, Lu Feng!!"

I must have been scared stiff to have called Lu Feng for help that desperately. If I could go back in time, I would definitely have chosen to remain silent. Yang Wei just wanted revenge, he wouldn't have done anything to me. Even if he did, I shouldn't have chosen that moment to agitate Lu Feng. I had never realised how terrifying my cries for help must have sounded to him.

Then came the sound of a beer bottle being broken. Yang Wei, who was pressing me down, was lifted by his collar, his head littered with shreds of broken glass and foam from the beer.

"You dare to fucking hit me? Just you wait till I'm done with this boy..."

Lu Feng took in the sight of my disheveled clothes with flaring red eyes, his expression akin to that of a beast.

All I heard was a soft "shnk" before I saw blood spilling from Yang Wei's abdomen.

Yang Wei simply let out a slight grunt before he fell flat on the ground.

The piercing screams started. His followers all went pale with shock, only knowing how to shout, "Murder! Someone is dead! Murder!"

Lu Feng was still holding onto the broken bloodstained beer bottle, his face cold and hard. He looked at me, and I too, looked at him. Both of our faces were painted in despair.

It was 1998, the time where summer was in one of its moods, seemingly coming at times and then not at all. I was 15, Lu Feng was 19.

The consequences we had to bear seemed to greatly surpass what we could withstand.

*the words for he and she in Chinese have the same pronunciation although they are written differently

Long Way Home - Chapter 17

To wind the matter up, Lu Feng was expelled because he had put all the blame on himself, so my punishment was a lot lighter. Although Yang Wei eventually still lived, the odds were not in Lu Feng's favour. Besides harming someone else intentionally, there was his relationship with me. He was of age, but I wasn't, and the law believed that a 15-year old would not have the ability to confirm one's own feelings, and that meant they had the intention to accuse Lu Feng for seducing me.

I lost all control, clawing and biting, attacking everyone who tried to raise this question with me, including my parents, and even Yi Chen. I hated their sinister and filthy stares. Do you not have eyes? Can't you tell that we are in love?!

Why is it that anything that happens between homosexuals are labeled as something abnormal? Who deemed this kind of love to be forbidden?

After being locked up at home for only three days, that outstanding, sensible, gentle and well-behaved Cheng Yi Chen was no longer recognizable.

My parents viewed me as a scourge; the family's source of pride had now become a source of shame they weren't willing to even mention. Even my younger brother was avoiding me. I stayed trapped in the tiny room shivering because of the pain, but I couldn't say a

word - for people like us, people would only laugh when we brought up the word "pain".

I didn't know how Lu Feng was, the trouble he had caused had gone far beyond what his father could tolerate. The last time we had met was in the office, his father was reluctantly apologising to the teacher and my parents, all the while glaring at Lu Feng. I understood that look in his eyes, it was saying: It must be my fault for not strictly watching over you usually, allowing you to become so spoiled till you've got yourself caught up in all this homosexual business and even killing others!

I could almost imagine the pain Lu Feng went through when the bat mercilessly hit his back.

But I couldn't see him.

When Yi Chen secretly opened the door which was locked from the outside, I was squatting in a corner of the room in a state of semi-consciousness looking at him. I must have looked horribly miserable and pathetic for Yi Chen looked as if he was ready to cry with just one glance.

"Brother..."

"Can you let me out?" I could no longer remember the number of times I had begged him like this.

Yi Chen didn't shake his head determinedly nor in a panic as usual, his thin single eyelid had folded itself into an angry and hateful line. "You still wish to see him?! That pervert was the one who made you like this, and you're still thinking of him?!"

Yi Chen, Dad and Mum were the same. They had all turned into strangers. At the same time, they had turned Lu Feng and me into strangers as well.

They had all refused to even mention the name "Lu Feng".

"But you don't have to think about him anymore," he hatefully spat, "He's leaving for America, and he's never coming back."

My eyes widened, a buzzing sound was starting in my ears.

"What's so strange about it?!" Yi Chen was looking at me in either pity or anger. "The fact that he isn't in jail is all thanks to the Lu family's wealth and influence! Sending him overseas to hide was only a matter of time!"

I stood up abruptly and dashed towards the door. Yi Chen swiftly shut the door at this, with his strength now, he could easily hold me down. "Dad and Mum wanted me to keep a close eye on you, so just give up and stop thinking about him!" Tears immediately sprung up from the corner of my eyes, the big drops falling rapidly to meet the ground.

Yi Chen looked away, unwilling to look at me. "Brother... Don't be like this, that person is a freak, what's so good about him? It's abnormal for the two of you to be together. Once he's gone, you'll be able to live like a normal person again in the future..."

I gave him a hard slap on the face.

In the many years we've grown up together, that was the first time I had hit him. The both of us stiffly stared at each other.

Yi Chen angrily pushed me away before standing up, ready to leave.

That was the only glimpse of hope I had left, I couldn't give it up.

Right before he shut the door, I got up and kneeled before him.

"Brother!" Yi Chen's voice, although angry and shocked, was trembling. "Why are you doing this for a person like that..."

"Yi Chen, let me go see him once, just once. Yi Chen... I beg of you... Yi Chen."

"What's the point of seeing him when he still has to leave?" Yi Chen gritted his teeth.

"Please." I could no longer think of any fancy words to move him, all I could do was robotically repeat myself once again.

"You're still crying! You're still crying for him!" Yi Chen gnashed his teeth, but the rim of his eyes were turning red too. "It's no use, you won't make it in time even if you go now."

"Yi Chen, Yi Chen..."

I knew I was torturing him with my haggard look then, but I had no choice.

He harshly cursed, taking out his wallet and throwing it in front of me before he turned and ran away. I heard the sound of him slamming the door to his room shut.

I called for a taxi and headed straight for the airport without a care for how expensive it was nor checked whether I had enough money to pay for the trip. Once I reached, I threw whatever money there was in the wallet to the driver and ran towards the hall.

Yi Chen was right, it was too late.

"Lu Feng, Lu Feng!" I had never thought that my voice could sound so desperate and hopeless. "Lu Feng, Lu Feng!!!"

The people passing by were all looking at me in either shock or pity.

"Lu Feng, Lu...Feng..." I only hoped that he could hear me. Hoped that he was able to turn back and give me one more look.

But there was nothing.

No miracles.

On television or in novels, why is it that the main characters would always have the

fortune of seeing each other again one last time, sometimes not even having to leave? Why is it that the world is so very kind to fictional characters, but is so very cruel to real and living people?

Long Way Home - Chapter 18

I clumsily sat down, curling myself up into a ball.

I stayed in this position for a long time until someone lightly shook me.

"Brother."

I allowed myself to be pulled into his arms without any resistance.

Yi Chen used his arms to cover my tear-stained face. "Let's go home."

I plastered my face on his chest. He could not understand my relationship with Lu Feng, but he still... loved me all the same.

I eventually transferred to another school. Whenever the boys saw me, especially in the toilets or bathrooms, they would hide in an exaggerated state of panic. Once I appeared, they would flee within a minute like a flock of birds. All of them were afraid that they would catch my eye. Every time it happened, I would secretly sneer. Homosexuals don't fall for every guy we see. Seeing those people, even if they were interested, I wouldn't want to start anything with them. If they looked down on me, I might not view them highly as well.

If I hadn't transferred at a time like that, it would have been awkward for everyone.

I transferred to a faraway school. Although the enrollment rate wasn't as good, but that wasn't the point. Nobody knew me there, so I didn't have to endure any looks from them. The atmosphere at home was still generally cold. Besides living expenses, they would never send me any letters. Only Yi Chen would secretly write to or call me.

I kept on writing letters to Lu Feng. Yi Chen was the one who gave me the address. He had admitted that he had gone to the school to look for Lu Feng and begged him for his address and information for me before he had left. When Yi Chen passed me that thin piece of paper, his youthful face was filled with guilt and betrayal. This guilt reached its peak, almost distorting his expression, when he promised that he would help me sneak the letter out if Lu Feng ever wrote back. I knew he had reached his limit when it came to his tolerance for this kind of love. What more could I ask of him?

However, I never received a single letter from Lu Feng.

I still insisted on writing till the day I received a letter back.

Then there came my returned letters with a stamp to indicate that they have moved away.

That day, I held my returned mail and cried for the entire night.

I knew, Lu Feng was never coming back.

From then on, without Lu Feng, I could easily sum up the years after with a few sentences. To tell the truth, I had done close to nothing during those years. Cheng Yi Chen became Cheng Yi Chen again, achieving good grades and behaving myself, becoming easygoing and honest.

I knew I had lost something in the process, but I couldn't identify what it was.

My relationship with my parents didn't improve till I got into a good university that was even further away from home than before. Maybe it was because they realised I was really going to go far far away this time, or maybe it was because the sight of me carrying a heavy luggage alone and heading for the train station had hit a soft spot. My strict father finally called, telling me to return home earlier once the holidays started and not hang out with any bad company.

I didn't mix with any of the bad company he mentioned, but the girlfriend they anticipated never appeared as well. When there was a call looking for me during the holidays, they were as alert as they were in the past. It's just that now, if it was a male, they would secretly listen in and would sigh in relief only if they heard a female's voice.

I never mentioned Lu Feng's name, and never showed any hints that I still missed him. It was as if that one year plus of feelings was but a joke that went overboard.

Only I knew about that small silver ring that was strung up by a silk thread around my neck. Because it had never left my side and due to the passing of time, it had long lost its shine, the outer layer had oxidized and turned slightly black.

I didn't want to remember him either, this sort of longing that had no hope, no future and no end would only make one suffer.

It's just that I, can't forget.

When I was in my fourth year of university, Yi Chen had started university as well. Although he didn't say so, I knew he had come all the way to this city for me. He was disappointed when he couldn't get into the university where I was studying at, but quickly became excited again when he found out that the two schools were separated by a mere road.

Yi Chen was actually more naive and childish than me - any child who went through what I did would definitely be more mature as compared to their real age - but he'd always stubbornly thought that I was the one who needed his care and protection; the scene where I weakly knelt down and hugged his legs while begging must have left him too deep an impression.

I knew deep in my heart he meant well, and I loved him too. After all, kinship was something that could not be destroyed or replaced, but the not so wonderful fact that I was a homosexual became something that we were both unwilling to mention but could not avoid, surfacing now and then to break the peace.

Although I was close to Yi Chen, we weren't as close as we were in the past. That was why even though I had rented a room, I was unwilling to live with him, forcing him to rent a single room two buildings away. The distance between two buildings was not far,

but it was very much real.

Yi Chen started looking more and more like me as he grew up; looking at him made me feel as if I was looking in the mirror. His olive-shaped eyes with ends that are slightly raised, the same smooth skin, the same thin upper lip and thicker lower lip, the same hairstyle, even our bodies were shaped similarly, slender and long. Of course, we still had our differences. He was bright, and as for me, although I had once perhaps been as carefree and bright, that was years ago.

I had smoothly promoted to my fourth year in university, and although I wasn't active, my grades were still outstanding, so I didn't have to let myself be silently buried.* In conclusion, everything was peaceful; nobody detected my unusual sexuality, mostly because of my lack of interest and courage in making male friends. Logically speaking, it would be impossible to say that a healthy twenty-year old male had no desires, but I had controlled them well. I suspect that I'm suffering from psychological trauma.

That trauma's name was Lu Feng.

My mood was extremely low, so I went to a bar I frequented to get some drinks. I usually ordered some mild alcohol and sat alone in the corner, silently drinking and staring into space, only leaving after a few hours had gone by and when I'm just about to get drunk. The next day, I would get my spirits up and start anew, similar to Kong Yi Ji.

I had thought that only single young ladies who were drunk would have the experience of being harassed, but society had unknowingly changed; stupid men would not even let go of a single drunk male now. When those few men who seemed to be up to no good sat down beside me, I had already felt that something was wrong.

Translator's note: *silently buried kind of means to be forgotten or let his future go to waste

Long Way Home - Chapter 19

I had thought that only single young ladies who were drunk would have the experience of being harassed, but society had unknowingly changed; stupid men would not even let go of a single drunk male now. When those few men who seemed to be up to no good sat down beside me, I had already felt that something was wrong. However, because I had drank too much, my reaction was slow, causing me to be pressed back down in my seat before I could even stand on my feet.

"Wha- what are you doing?" Alcohol didn't make me excited, only making me slow and causing me to stutter, just like how my face wouldn't turn red like a tomato when I was drunk, only leaving a thin blush on my pale skin.

"Your alcohol intake is good, join us for a few more drinks."

Someone's hand was on my waist, another touching my chest.

"No, you can't..." I started speaking even more slower when I became panicked. Those hands continued roaming on my body, I was unable to get them off me. "Get your hands... a.. way..."

"You must be lonely being by yourself right? Let us accompany you and have some fun."

"I don't... want this..." How could two hands win against six? I was feeling terribly uncomfortable and was breaking out into cold sweat.

Seeing that my resistance was weak, they became even more daring, clamping me in the middle. Someone touched my face. "What is it? You're going to cry? Here, I'll buy you a drink as compensation."

"No..." I desperately turned my head, trying to avoid the glass that was firmly pressed to my lips.

My jaw was pinched open, allowing the cold and strong liquid to be poured in forcefully. Half of it spilled out from the corners of my mouth, drenching my chest. I choked momentarily, coughing harshly, my face a bright red.

My helpless state made them even more interested, pressing me down quickly to drink a second glass.

My hands and legs went weak, my head was spinning badly, my vision a blurred mess as I tried to struggle. "I don't... want... to drink..."

"What are you guys doing?"

To have someone intervening was a surprise; the few fools who would step forward to help a stranger had long perished, and a grown man like me had basically no worth to be saved. Even if it was the owner of the bar, he would often wait till he could no longer stand seeing his glasses or lamps get damaged before shouting for them to stop, adding a line of, "If you want to make a mess, then do it outside!"

"Nothing, we're all friends." The few men laughed as they held me. "Let's talk outside, come on."

"No..." I struggled desperately to break free from their hold. "I don't... know them..."

I staggered about for a while before another pair of arms held me strongly.

I looked at him dazedly.

"Cheng Yi Chen? It's you?!"

...Who? This person...

I strained my eyes in an attempt to recognise his face.

His features seemed familiar, but also completely foreign at the same time.

Lu, Lu Feng?!

No, no, Lu Feng wouldn't have returned. He wouldn't hold me like this.

But, but...

If it was Lu Feng... What if it was Lu Feng...

I was in a state of confusion, grabbing onto the ends of his clothes blindly.

I could no longer hear what that person was saying, I only knew he was ready to push me away.

Lu Feng, don't be like this, I want to talk to you, don't do this to me...

I hugged his waist in a state of panic. "Don't... don't leave..."

"...What are you doing?" He brushed my hand away roughly.

"Wait, don't... leave..." I clung on to him stubbornly, burying my face in his shoulder, afraid that he was going to leave and never come back again.

The noise from the surroundings became a blur, I could only hear him gently getting me to let go by saying, "Yi Chen... Let me go first, okay? I won't leave."

I cautiously let go. Thankfully, he simply lowered his head to look at me and didn't take the chance to escape.

"Yi Chen, how about drinking some tea?"

I didn't move, foolishly looking at him.

Lu Feng, in the past, you have never called me like this.

Spacing out for a while, he suddenly rushed towards my side furiously. "Speak clearly! Who the hell is his friend?!"

I didn't even have the time to reach out to him before he turned and punched the other.

A horrible sound resounded when his punch landed on flesh, someone was crying out in pain. No, Lu Feng, you can't get into trouble again...

I unsteadily stood up and blocked his way, trying to stop something before I felt a pain at my neck. I didn't manage to see what was going on before a sudden force overwhelmed me, making me fall, my head falling backwards and landing on something unknown, my eyelids gradually becoming too heavy for me to keep them open.

When I woke up, I found myself still lying sorrily beside the bar table. There was no one around, except for a waiter who was busy cleaning up the mess. The Lu Feng in my hallucinations, had indeed disappeared.

I blankly sat there for a while, no one bothered nor noticed me.

I finally got up and silently left.

The ring was gone.

Making sure that there was indeed nothing around my neck, I desperately searched myself once over. When did I lose it? Before I had gone drinking the night before, I was sure I had felt its weight vividly pressing against my chest.

When exactly had I lost it?

The bar only opened at 7pm, so I stayed by the door till it opened and rushed in.

The lights weren't bright, so I squatted and searched every inch of the area where the fight broke out yesterday night till my hands were coated with dust.

Nothing.

I held on to a small bit of hope and searched once more, even checking the cracks in the floorboard, and yet, nothing.

The owner of the bar watched me in shock as I crawled around under the tables, distraught. I really wanted to explain my predicament to him, ask him if he had picked up a small silver ring, but despair had engulfed me, rendering me speechless.

The worst scenario would be that it had already been swept up with the broken glass pieces and the other pieces of trash.

The one thing that Lu Feng had left me with.

Long Way Home - Chapter 20

The one thing that Lu Feng had left me with.

That person appeared again after I had blankly searched the floor for days in a row and made sure that it was indeed empty.

"Hey." He was grinning, "We meet again. Are you here to drink?"

I momentarily couldn't recognise who he was. If I knew someone this exciting, it can't be that I had no impression of him.

"Are you looking for something? Is it this?" He searched the pockets of his suit and took something out.

That small, dull-coloured ring lay quietly in his hands. I didn't even say a word of thanks before snatching it over.

I had thought that the last link between me and Lu Feng was going to be broken just like that.

He was shocked at the sight of me crying while tightly pressing the ring to my chest, only mumbling after staring for a while, "Are, are you alright? I wanted to return this to you the last time we met, but... you know too, after fighting, I forgot about it..."

I finally realised that there was a bewildered stranger standing in front of me. "Thank you so much." Feeling embarrassed for losing my calm in front of him, I sniffed. "This is very important to me."

"Oh?" He was a little confused. Sneaking a quick glance at the ring, then once more, a sneaky look appeared on his face. "Was it from your girlfriend?"

I was afraid I would scare him if I said "boyfriend", so I simply nodded. Lu Feng just had to change his sex for now then.

"Oh," he sounded as if he understood everything, "Don't be sad, there are plenty of other fishes in the sea, there's no need to stick to one. Look at you crying so terribly, does she know? If it was not meant to be, then why not just happily find someone else..."

Having been comforted by him like that, I felt a little amused. "Thank you."

"Oh, no problem. As long as you're happy." He seemed to be a lot more relieved.

This person... is a good person... but he is a bit of a fool.

"Qin Lang, is your friend feeling better?" The owner brought a plate of fruits over, winking at him as he walked over.

"He's fine, how could anything go wrong for Yi Chen?" He was smiling widely, a hand placed over my shoulders.

I was shocked.

Is he someone close to me?

"My name is Shen Chao, I'm the owner of this bar. If you ever run into any trouble in the future, just look for me. Qin Lang's friends are my friends too!" The owner extended his hand openly.

Wha-what? Why are they both the kind that warm up to people this easily?

"Thank, thank you." I blankly shook his hand, then suddenly remembered. "You guys were the ones who helped me when I got drunk here the last time right?"

Even so, there is no need to be this intimate.

"The credit goes mainly to Qin Lang, he's still very proud of it now. It had nothing to do with me, I just stood by the side and watched." He exchanged looks with Qin Lang, then grinned before walking away.

"Qin, Qin Lang." I was a little awkward. I couldn't say someone's name so openly like him when we had just met. "For these two times that you've helped me, I really don't know how to thank you. Especially today, you've helped me find this ring..." I should be this polite to a person that's about 80% a stranger right?

He looked insulted. "Why are you being this polite? Alright, alright, if you find that

this is a great favour, then there's no need for any thanks, just keep this in your heart!" After thinking for a while, he added, "If you really want to express your gratitude, I don't want you to sacrifice your body either, treating me to a drink would do!"

Wou-would any man sacrifice their body for him so easily?

Once we sat down to drink, this strange fellow started talking nonstop. He was actually talking to me about all sorts of things, was this the way to approach someone else? I couldn't help but take a second look at him. He was very young, and very bright and handsome. On the night when I had gotten drunk, I had blearily thought that he looked like Lu Feng, but comparing them now, the only similarities they share would be the outline of their jaws... and their gender. His facial features were bright and alive, a stark contrast to Lu Feng's cold self. He was talkative too, I couldn't even get two sentences in. Lu Feng wasn't even willing to open his mouth in the presence of unfamiliar people. I observed for a while, then concluded that this kind of person who looked as if he was able to accept everything and had a personality that seemed to be able to get along with everyone could be summed up in one word: *playboy*.

He didn't know that I had already given him this label in my heart, and was still talking about the formation of volcanoes and earthquakes.

How pitiful, he must be afraid that if he stopped, there would be an awkward silence. This is a rather naive and kind *playboy*. I was afraid if I stayed any longer, he would start bringing up the topic of how humans and beings came about, so after I drank the last bit of alcohol, I stood up. "Qin Lang, you've accompanied me for so long and said so much. Thanks to you, I feel much better now!" I grabbed my coat, ready to leave.

I had drank a little too much after all. The ground felt slightly empty when I stood up, making me sway slightly.

He immediately held me. "Are you going to be alright after drinking so much? Do you want me to send you home?"

"No need, no need." I still felt a little uncomfortable in the arms of another man, so I struggled out of his grip. "I'll call for a taxi."

"Oh, do be careful then."

I personally felt that the way Qin Lang looked at me was a little strange.

Could he be a *gay* too?

Well... I was just randomly thinking, there's no need for the sudden bolt of thunder!

Stupid weather.

Long Way Home - Chapter 21 (M)

After separating from Qin Lang for a week, I saw that newspaper.

It was a boring weekend, so the most suitable time to carry one with you was during

meal times or when going to the toilet. For most people, the most interesting section would be the entertainment section of the newspaper where the many scandals and gossip about the big and small names in the industry took up our spare time. I was no exception.

The main protagonist was a familiar woman whose juicy gossip had probably sustained countless of reporters' jobs. This time, the rumour was about a marriage. The woman who had mesmerized and played with so many men was actually obediently surrendering, and it seemed that the two had fallen in love at first sight and had gotten engaged immediately. Amidst all this, there was also some talk about the marriage being solely for improving business relations. I slowly read through the long article as I ate the curry chicken rice at the student's cafeteria, estimating that I would finish reading once I finished my last piece of chicken.

"The man is an American-born Chinese, the second son of a well-known entrepreneur, age 24, young, handsome and charming..."

My eyes skipped past the dry descriptive phrases used, immediately landing on the name of this young, handsome and charming winner of this big affair.

Lu Feng.

I looked at it once more. Lu, Feng. Two words, there was no difference.

It didn't feel real. I flipped back to the front to see a picture which I had previously not taken notice of of the supposed groom and bride standing side by side.

That person, he had become more built and mature, the lines on his face now completely belonged to a man with a great deal of experience. His expression was still cold, but with it, he carried a smile.

This person is Lu Feng.

He's going to get married.

All the illusions I secretly had immediately disappeared with a "poof".

From now on, I would have no rights to even have the last bit of hope or anticipation.

Alcohol was indeed something great, it was cold at first touch, but once it reached the stomach, it becomes unbearably hot, akin to that of a fire burning. I drank till I was giddy, the owner didn't allow the bartender to serve me any more alcohol, so I sat dazedly holding an empty glass.

I couldn't cry nor make a scene. I couldn't say anything. There was bitterness in my heart, even bitterness on my tongue, but I couldn't say anything.

Someone carried me, bridal style. I struggled with my unfocused eyes in an attempt to recognise his angry face. When I was slightly conscious, I could tell it was Qin Lang, but I quickly fell into a blurred confusion again, thinking that he was Lu Feng.

I wrapped his coat around myself and curled myself into the backseat of the car without

vomiting. My drinking etiquette was good, I would only quietly curl up into a ball, my entire body feeling hot but cold at the same time. I shivered.

"Where do you live? I'll send you home... I lent my house to my friend for a party, so I can't bring you there."

I shut my eyes and mouth tightly, hearing him sigh.

The car stopped for a while, then continued on its way slowly.

With a sudden brake, I rolled down from the seat, landing harshly on the carpeted interior of the car.

He cursed.

There was a sound of the car doors being opened and closed, then a pair of strong arms lifted me up.

"Are you hurt anywhere?"

Shivering from the cold, I instinctively wrapped my arms around his waist and buried my face in his chest.

Who is this warm, strong and tall man?

I searched his body confusedly.

Who had held me tightly like this?

Lu Feng, Lu Feng.

I held on to him tightly, burying myself into his arms.

Don't forget me, don't fall for someone else, don't say you don't recognise me, don't use the very hands you've hugged me with to hug someone else.

Don't forget that you said we'll be together forever.

Don't forget that I will always be waiting for you.

Lu Feng.

I found a pair of something soft and warm, then immediately plastered my lips messily on it.

Lu Feng, I haven't kissed you in five years.

Are you still the same as you were in the past, with a little stubble under your chin, knocking against my teeth once you get anxious, and becoming shy once I start taking the lead even though you always pretend to be so manly and beastly?

Lu Feng, I really don't know if you're still willing to kiss a man you no longer love.

He's reacting, splendid. I know my skills were terrible, I could never learn how to tease, so I could still disappoint when it came to the climax.

But I still love you.

He held me really tightly, the faint smell of tobacco filling my mouth. I was terribly dizzy, my fingers unable to undo a button even after a long struggle, so I could only helplessly lie under him. He took everything off in a flash, including the heavy jeans, then pressed harshly.

His body was warm, perhaps even hot. Afraid of the cold, I stuck myself on him. Pain. The pain was getting worse, the feeling slowly extending till I felt it all over my body. I bit hard on my lower lip, trying my best to not move towards the back and hung on to his waist.

Lu Feng, when we did it that time, I was so awkward, were you extremely not pleased? If I was more willing, bore a little more pain and performed a little better, would you have... remembered me for a little while more?

His thrusts were close to brutal, almost making me mute.

I cried, wishing to call out Lu Feng's name, but that muffled sound was completely blocked by his lips.

Long Way Home - Chapter 22

The bed felt a little too hard for comfort, and the blanket draped around me didn't have its usual grassy scent. Instead, it faintly gave out a smell that seemed to be that of a lazy person who hadn't bothered to either wash nor dry it for a couple of years. The posters messily pasted on the wall weren't mine, neither were the curtains as it lacked the light blue grid pattern that I was familiar with.

This wasn't my room. However, it seemed strangely familiar.

Lacking the energy to even try and find out who the owner of this room that looked like it hadn't been cleaned for nearly a week was, I could only hope that the person opening the door wasn't Qin Lang.

Although the dizzy spell had yet to dissipate, the fact that I had done it with Qin Lang in the car yesterday night was crystal clear to me.

I was too ashamed to even see him, not to mention having to explain why I had jumped on him out of nowhere. Dear god, please don't force me to jump out through the windows.

The person who walked over forcefully yanked away the blanket that I was using to hide myself.

Thank god, such rough actions can't possibly belong to Qin Lang.

"It's already afternoon and you still don't want to wake up?! Hurry and get up already!"

Stupefied, I sat up and looked at the terrible expression on the face that it belonged to..... Yi Chen.

"Why... are you here... um... where is Qin Lang?"

Yi Chen was obviously angered. "Don't tell me you expected to wake up on that playboy's bed?"

I lowered my eyes, not daring to make a sound as I clenched the bed sheets.

"Brother, did you and that person..." Yi Chen took a deep breath before continuing, "He forced himself on you, right?"

"That's not it," I replied with my head still lowered, "I'm the one who seduced him."

Yi Chen exploded with fury. "What's wrong with you? Haven't you had enough of playing around? Don't foolishly fall in love with such a playboy!"

"He treats me well."

"He'll treat anyone he hasn't gotten sick of well."

"Whatever," I retorted as I violently straightened out the messy bed sheet, "At most, he'll just throw me aside after he has had his fun, it's not as if I haven't been dumped before. I'm already used to it."

"When did you become like this..." Yi Chen was on the verge of going berserk. I could tell he wished that he had knives in each of his hands. "Mom and Dad will be infuriated if they find out that you are together with a guy again."

"Do you guys really still think that I can end up with a woman?"

"Are women really that intolerable? You were doing fine for the past few years so we thought that your sickness was more or less cured and you could finally marry a wife and have kids..."

I burst into laughter, toning down only after I noticed Yi Chen's confused and stunned expression.

"My sickness can't be cured." I looked up at him, "Yi Chen, do you still remember Lu Feng?"

Yi Chen tried to avoid my eyes.

"He's getting married." I chuckled, "Amazing, isn't it? He recovered from that sickness and even got himself a wife. You guys are hoping that I'll turn out like him and live a normal life, right? Well, too bad. I don't have the capability to cure my sickness that effectively. In my entire life, I will only be interested in men. Know why? It's because you can't cure homosexuality, so just give up on that thought."

I got off the bed and wore my clothes and shoes, "Yi Chen, if you ever feel embarrassed of your gay brother, then you can just pretend that you are the only son in the Cheng family."

Yi Chen didn't come to look for me afterwards. I could understand his anger and disappointment, mostly because I had said something hurtful. But what he didn't realize was that he had hurt me in the same way.

What's wrong with liking someone of the same gender? All I want is for someone to love me for who I am, what's wrong with that?

I continued to avoid Qin Lang in fear that the atmosphere between us would turn awkward. Since he was a friend of Yi Chen, he couldn't have been gay, which meant that what he did with me that time was... mostly on my part to blame.

However, I was called by him to meet up in the end. We met one late afternoon in an empty coffee shop and sat near the window. The sun that brightly shone on this winter day had covered the entirety of our table, giving a warm ambience; a stark contrast to the uneasiness between the two of us that were seated face-to-face.

His nervousness was obvious. I was no better, busily fidgeting with a glass of water.

"Yi Chen..." he softly called out. He had finally opened his mouth to speak at last.

I didn't dare look him in the eye so I lifted my head only so ever slightly to indicate that I was listening.

"That night... I did it with you..." he muttered.

For heaven's sake, I am aware of that fact, you don't have to bring it up again.

After saying that, he didn't utter a single word.

At my wit's end, I finally looked up and caught him staring at me. The way he looked at me was similar to how one looks at an abandoned puppy that's completely drenched sitting in front of them. His expression could be described in three words, 'You poor thing'. It became even more unbearable. I was pretty sure anyone could tell how panic-stricken I was with one look, but I didn't plan on earning any sympathy from Qin Lang.

"Qin... Qin Lang..."

"Yes?" He focused on me intently with a gaze that gave me a little spark of hope.

"You..." What I had wanted to say originally was forgotten as soon as I felt the sweat-drenched newspaper in my pocket. When I opened my mouth again, what came out was "Would you...like to be with me?"

He was shocked, his hands starting to tremble violently.

As I had expected, he was frightened by my question. Since he didn't come here to confess, it probably meant that he was here to cut off all ties with me.

It turns out that I had overthought this.

It hadn't been easy to gather up the courage to come here and settle this without being too emotional but that collected thinking had ended up in embarrassment and shame. I hastily stood up and affirmed him, "Just joking... I was just joking... Don't mind it too much."

"Yi Chen..."

"I... need to go back..."

"No..listen to me..."

"It's okay, I'm just joking, you don't need to take it so seriously..."

My one-sided rambling to justify myself and self-comforting session was suddenly cut off by him, "I want to! I want to be with you forever!"

He pulled me into a tight embrace, caressing my head and shoulder tenderly, as if showing his love through his actions.

"I love you, Yi Chen... I love you..."

I thought about it carefully before reciprocating the hug with my arms tightly wrapped around him.

Be it whether his feelings were out of pity or out of love, it didn't matter anymore, because all I needed was the warmth of his embrace. I was just too lonely, to the point where I had become desperate.

In the pocket of my outer coat, the newspaper had crumpled to become all soft and squishy. On the cover page, it writes of a certain tycoon prince and his princess finally tying the knot as they hold their grand wedding.

Translator: eiruuuuu

Proofreader: acupofmemory - I'll like to say a huge thank you to our translator for this chapter, you've been a great help :')

Long Way Home - Chapter 23

Qin Lang was a very good lover. He could easily tell what brand of fruit wine I liked to drink, which store's soy sauce beef I liked to eat, what kind of shoes I liked to wear, what type of songs I liked to listen to simply by observing silently. He knew that I liked Korean games, Japanese animation, knew that I was afraid of the cold and afraid of thirst, and that I had a slight gastric problem. That was why I was never cold, thirsty nor felt any gastric pain when I was with him. I would always hear B'z's CD playing at his house, receive the original soundtracks of various animations, including the expensive DVD-BOX sold in 2002.

He was taking care of me.

I thought I would be able to fall in love with him in no time, or perhaps, I had already unknowingly fallen for him.

I didn't attend Qin Lang's grand birthday banquet. Who would be willing to strangle themselves in a tightly-fitted suit while drinking a cocktail on an empty stomach, all the while having to serve up smiles to the large amount of people who have shown up from nowhere? Even he had thrown his tie away and escaped halfway through. A birthday party of true significance should be held in the average bar, messing around and letting themselves go wild, the invitees would only include your close friends; any other person would not be allowed to enter.

In my opinion, Yi Chen and Qin Lang couldn't be coined as "close friends". Once they met, the atmosphere would freeze, their smiles stiff and uneasy. It could be seen that they had known each other for quite some time, and their friendship seemed to run deep, but as to what they felt awkward about, that was unknown to me. Qin Lang was a little more enthusiastic, sometimes drawing close to him in a friendly manner to try and please him, but Yi Chen would always pull a long face, never really looking at him in the eye. I felt that Yi Chen's dislike for Qin Lang was different from that towards Lu Feng; for Lu Feng, it was a strong rejection, but for Qin Lang, it seemed to be merely slight anger on his part.

The balance between my brother and my boyfriend was one I naturally had to work hard at maintaining. In order to improve their relationship, I had put in a lot of effort, for example, getting an extra present on Yi Chen's behalf and forcing him to come, of course there were plenty of times where I had to work hard at pleasing him, this time was no exception.

After much obvious hinting from my side, Yi Chen eventually unwillingly gave the present to the birthday boy. Thankfully, Qin Lang didn't mind, and still smiled rather foolishly. I guessed I could understand my brother, after all, he still bore a huge dislike towards homosexuals, even arguing with his real brother over this matter, least to say Qin Lang. How could he have greeted him happily?

The owner of the bar brought an outstanding lady, to whom Yi Chen called "Senior". The owner's and her interest in Yi Chen and me were clearly written on their faces, not only that, but in bold and uppercase letters too. They circled around the two of us for a long while, exclaiming, "So alike... You two basically look the same."

We aren't twins, it's just our looks that are similar. Those who know the two of us would never make the mistake of recognising us wrongly.

Yi Chen's face turned black. I thought he might have felt insulted, so I quickly comforted him, "That's not true, you're much more handsome than me." Just as Qin Lang was getting a knife to cut the cake with, Yi Chen said in a low voice, "Only pigs would mistake the both of us for the other."

Thankfully, the owner and his senior didn't catch that.

"Yi Chen."

I turned to look at Qin Lang, my brother also doing the same.

Qin Lang looked at the two of us, his expression awkward as he hesitated.

Yi Chen immediately turned away.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Yi Chen," he was a little nervous, "This is for you. There's your favourite almonds on it, I'd specially asked Shen Chao for them!"

"Oh, thank you." I took the plate. "But it's not almonds that I fancy, is it? Hmm... He might like it." I pointed at Yi Chen.

Qin Lang started calling my younger brother "Yi Chen, Yi Chen", but no matter what, he refused to turn his head till I pulled him over. He then unwillingly glanced at the exquisite pastry, stubbornly reaching out for another piece of the cake.

The relaxed smile that appeared on Qin Lang's face gave me a strange feeling, but I couldn't quite pinpoint what that feeling was.

Everyone only started leaving in the late night. Qin Lang got his car and drove to the entrance where Yi Chen and I were standing at. "Get in."

Yi Chen pushed me. "Brother, you go on."

"You're not coming with us?" I was surprised.

"I'm going to stay up at my friend's house to play CS, it's not convenient."

"Just get on, I can send your brother back home first before I send you to your friend's house."

"There's no need." Yi Chen flagged down a taxi. "You better send my brother back home properly, and treat him better, or I'll punch you!"

"Your brother... really treats you well." Qin Lang slowly started the car. "He can't bear to see anyone hurt you."

I didn't know how to answer, but Qin Lang didn't need one as he continued, "The person he hates the most is Lu Feng... so he would never allow me to become a second Lu Feng, or he'll hate me forever. But I'm different from Lu Feng." Qin Lang turned to look at me. "I'm different from him, do you guys understand?"

Qin Lang's tone was laced with frustration and a hint of hatred.

But I didn't know why.

I only knew that the name Lu Feng made me feel slightly dizzy again.

Long Way Home - Chapter 24 (M)

I'd thought I had long forgotten him.

I curled myself up on the bed while tightly clutching the blanket. Why do you have to

compare? I'm aware that you're different from him. I know you won't ever leave me behind.

Whilst being in a daze, the phone suddenly rang; the caller ID displayed was 'Qin Lang'. However, the flustered and exasperated voice belonged to Shen Chao, "Hello? Yi Chen, it's you right? Did you quarrel with Qin Lang again? I don't know what's up but he has gotten himself really drunk. Hurry, come over and see for yourself..."

I quickly put on some clothes and rushed over to the bar. An hour ago, he had clearly told me he wanted to rest at home, but he was now lying on the sofa in the lounge of the pub with his tie removed, along with a face filled with anxiety and frustration. "What exactly did you do to him?" Shen Chao curiously asked as he raised an eyebrow, "Was he that provoked to have driven back here just to get drunk and act like a madman? He's even muttering your name for every shot he takes...."

That fella had a grin plastered on his face as he left, closing the door behind him. As soon as I touched the drunken man's body, he unconsciously mumbled, "Yi Chen...Yi Chen..."

"I'm right here." Watching him unsteadily fall off in an attempt to get off the sofa, I hurriedly grabbed ahold of him. "Stop moving already."

"Yi Chen?!" His eyes widened as he held on to my shoulders tightly. After staring at me for what seemed like an eternity, he shut his eyes tightly, calling out in a hoarse voice, "Yi Chen, it's really you..." His grip became even tighter.

All of a sudden, he seemed a little pitiful.

"Shen Chao called and told me you suddenly came back and got yourself terribly drunk so I came over..." I hesitated a little before deciding to lie down on his chest,

"Actually Qin Lang, were you bothered by the thought of Lu Feng? I'm sorry... maybe it's true that I can't completely forget about him but...but I won't let this continue any further... from now on.... you will be the only one I think about... the only person I'll love dearly... so please forgive me, don't act like this anymore..."

He trembled for a moment before grabbing me with more force than before. His fingers dug into my shoulders.

"I'm sorry..." I gently pushed away the hair that was covering his forehead. It was a little saddening. For the first time, I gathered up all my courage and lightly kissed him on the lips.

My shoulders were hurting. All of a sudden, he fiercely pushed me onto the floor. Not even having the time to react, my top was already taken off as he dived down to bite at my chest.

"Ughhh..." So painful... His bites were close to brutal, his hands aimlessly roaming my body, touching me everywhere. I didn't know what to do, nor did I dare to tell him to stop.

His kisses were getting more and more intense as I tried to keep up. I was leaning closely to his lower body which was already reacting. Nerves were getting the better of me as I tensed up, not even daring to move. One of his hands was feeling me up, while the other was caressing my lips. As our bodies tightly rubbed against each other, the friction made me anxious.

"Yi Chen, can you say you love me?" he breathed into my ear as he licked and bit on its edges.

I swallowed hard as my hands tried to hold on to him, "I love you, Qin Lang."

"Keep saying it, okay? Yi Chen... say you won't ever leave me, say you love me... say you love me..." he repeatedly mumbled out in short breaths, his hands violently exploring my body. With a swift movement, he pulled off my belt and took off my pants. I couldn't breathe. Suddenly, my face felt wet, my eyes widening due to the shock.

"Qin Lang, Qin Lang... Please don't cry..." I felt absolutely helpless as I hurriedly tried to wipe away the tears on his drenched face, "I'm sorry, I love you... I'm so

sorry..."

My waist was lifted up high as he roughly thrust.

I took a deep breath so as to restrain myself from shouting. "Yi Chen, Yi Chen..." He firmly held on to my waist, pulling me towards him as he moved passionately, all the while wildly biting me.

With no energy to even moan, I allowed him to continue with his forceful thrusts as my mind spun. Afraid of falling, I tightly held on to his waist.

I'm still not used to sexual intercourse between men; this kind of vigorous movement could make me lose my senses.

"Yi Chen, Yi Chen..." He moved even more fiercely as he repeatedly called out.

I felt a little touched. Quickly, I struggled to wrap my arms around his neck.

"Yi Chen..."

The ramming continued as I tried my best to lean back so that the impact will be less painful, but my waist was tightly secured by his large hands.

It hurts so bad...

"Yi Chen... Yi Chen..." Until the very last moment, even with an unclear mind, I could still distinctively hear him painfully repeating, "Yi Chen, Yi Chen..."

In that moment, a bad feeling surfaced. Somehow, it felt as though the person of the name he has been calling out and the person who was currently in his embrace were not the same.

Translator: eiruuuuu

Proofreader: acupofmemory

Long Way Home - Chapter 25

"You're awake? I just made some coffee, do you want some?"

I confusedly opened my eyes to look at the man holding a tray while staring down at me.

"AH---" I jumped up, pointing at him with trembling fingers. "You, you, you...what are you doing here?!!"

Shen Chao got a shock from my screaming, backing away while shielding himself with the tray. "I, I was called here by Qin Lang to take care of you... Hey, I didn't do anything to you, don't start imagining strange things..."

"I, I'm not wearing anything!!" Jerk, he didn't even bother to cover me with something before letting another man come in...

"What's the matter?" Shen Chao was baffled. "I'm a man too."

There wasn't much for this man to be taught anymore. I hurriedly put on my pants, that fellow actually stared at me the whole time both innocently and curiously, how infuriating.

"Where's Qin Lang?" I'm going to punch him once I see him.

"Him? He has some urgent matters to attend to at home, so he asked me to look after you..."

"Oh..." Even so, not seeing him after waking up from sex was a little unpleasant.

"You're not staying to grab a bite?" Shen Chao held on to the tray, unwilling to give up.

"Thanks..." The colour of the coffee was dubious, thinking about it, the boss seemed to have a thing for inventing new products. "...I think it's better if I go back first."

After taking a shower and washing off the mess on my body, I saw the ring hung around my neck in the mirror again.

I twitched. Quickly, I lowered my head and took it down, putting it back into its box before locking it in the cupboard without the courage to give it another glance.

Goodbye, Lu Feng.

I think, it's time for me to try and love someone else.

Blowing my hair dry after wearing my clothes, I saw that the old answering machine was blinking. The messages left were all from Yi Chen.

"Brother, where did you go? Why aren't you back yet?"

"You didn't pick up your phone, did you not bring it with you? Give me a call immediately after you hear this message."

"Brother, you're still not back? I'm Yi Chen! Where exactly are you? Quickly return my calls, it's late, I'm worried."

"Brother, don't scare me. Return my call, return my call, return my call!!!"

.....

I quickly brushed my hair before running downstairs, grabbing two packs of biscuits along the way to appease him. Yi Chen lived nearby, it would be better if I went to see him straight.

That idiot didn't close his door again. Just as I was about to push it open, I heard an agitated voice belonging to another male inside.

It was Qin Lang.

I felt slightly uneasy. Wasn't their relationship...all the while cold? Didn't Qin Lang...have urgent matters to attend to at home? Why is he here?!

I held my breath. Trembling, I neared the door and peeked in through the half-open door.

"I hugged him for a whole night, we did it for the whole night... My skill isn't considered bad, Xiao Chen said he's really happy... Yi Chen, are you satisfied with what I'm doing? Am I good to your brother?"

"Shut up! Shut up!"

"What is it? Is it not good enough, Yi Chen? Or are you hoping that Xiao Chen and I would continue doing it today? Or do you think that I have to improve my skills?"

"Please, stop talking..."

"You're crying? Yi Chen?" That was definitely Qin Lang. He stretched his hand out and stroked Yi Chen's hair with an unimaginable gentleness. "You still mind, don't you?"

"But did you know? For the whole night, I was calling your name, your name, not his, Yi Chen..."

I froze up.

What...are...they saying?

I don't understand... I really don't understand...

There was a moment of silence. Yi Chen raised his head abruptly, shouting madly, "Qin Lang, are you still human? Are you a fucking person? My brother is already like that, and you're still treating him like that? You still dare to treat him like that? He loves you so much, have you ever considered his feelings? And you still dare to do such a thing? What do you take him as?"

"I'm taking him for you, didn't I make that clear enough? When I pressed him down, all I was thinking about was your face!" Qin Lang grabbed hold of Yi Chen's hand which was just about to land a slap across his face and pressed him down on the floor. "Cheng Yi Chen, listen up, I have had enough! The one that I love is you, from the very beginning till now, it was you! You always ask me if I have considered your brother's feelings, but have you ever considered mine? Yes! I know that your brother has had it tough when it comes to his love life, and it's heartbreaking, but that wasn't because of me! If that bastard Lu didn't pay his debt, why should I? Why do I have to be the sacrificial item for your deep brotherhood? Or were you ready to deceive your brother forever and exchange our sorrows for his falsely-created sense of happiness? I'm not doing this anymore, Yi Chen, I'm telling you, everything ends today!"

I, I still don't understand.

But I knew I shouldn't be staying to eavesdrop any longer. I, I'm just asking for the disgrace that would follow...

I should still be able to make it right? They shouldn't have discovered I'm here yet... If I sneak away, no one would know I heard any of this... They wouldn't be put in a difficult spot either...

Just as I was about to turn around, my eyes met Yi Chen's dark widened eyes.

No, don't call for me, I'll leave immediately...

"Brother..."

Even Qin Lang turned around and looked at me in surprise.

"I... I..." I took a few steps backwards, all the way till I was at the stairs, blankly raising the biscuits in my hand, "Yi Chen... This, I brought this for you to eat..."

"Brother, Qin Lang was just spouting nonsense, he hasn't fully come out of his drunken stupor." Yi Chen grabbed me in a state of panic. "Don't listen to him, he'll definitely treat you well forever." He helplessly looked towards Qin Lang. "Right?"

Qin Lang refused to look at him, instead staring straight at me. "I'm sorry, Xiao Chen, what I said just now was the truth, the one I love is your brother, it always has been so!"

I seemed to be a little clearer now. "I, I know..." Flustered, I quickly tried to break free from Yi Chen.

Yi Chen held on to me tightly, unwilling to let go. "Brother, listen to me..."

I tried my best in struggling free, carelessly pushing here and there, and just as I had finally pushed him away, my feet met nothing, causing me to fall and roll down the stairs.

Why do I always show such a pathetic side of me in front of them?

When I woke up, Yi Chen was sobbing as he helped me apply medicine on my leg. "Brother, I'm sorry..."

"Xiao Chen, if you don't mind, I would like to tell you the truth." Qin Lang's voice was still gentle. He grabbed hold of one of my hands to which I tried moving away from, but was eventually still held tightly again.

"Before I knew your brother, I had long fallen for him, but I wasn't a homosexual, he wasn't one too, so we were both confused... When I got into a fight for you that time at the bar, I had thought you were him. When I called you "Yi Chen", you must have had a shock, didn't you? Did you notice that the two of you have names with the exact same pronunciation, and that it was impossible to tell them apart? The lights in the bar at night were so dim, and I never knew that Yi Chen has a brother that looked so similar to him, so I had assumed you were him. The times after that were all the same, both of you had such differing personalities, I had felt that it was strange too, but I didn't think much, until that time I hugged you in the car...remember? Although you were the one who initiated it, I really like Yi Chen, I like him too much, and thinking that you were him, how could I reject? I got Yi Chen's address from my senior, and wanted to send you home. I was so excited, so in bliss then, but little did I know, the person who opened the door, was, was..." he paused, "It turns out that I had hugged the wrong person..."

I curled myself into the couch, hiding my face as I stayed still.

How strange, why would I have even thought that there would be someone who would truly love me, thought that someone would love me forever? Why did I have such a ridiculous thought?

"I'm really sorry, Xiao Chen. I had wanted to be honest with you a long time ago, but

Yi Chen told me about Lu Feng, and that he was afraid you'll be hurt again, so he didn't allow me to say anything. When I asked you out, I had wanted to clear things up, but with that expression, how could I have said anything? In the end, we ended up together. But the one I love is Yi Chen! I already told you, I'm different from Lu Feng, totally different, because I'm not in love with you!"

"About yesterday night, I admit, I was selfish. I clearly knew you weren't Yi Chen, but I was feeling terrible because Yi Chen had just rejected me. Why should I have to suffer for so long? I took you for him... The one I called out for, that was him too. I'm sorry, Xiao Chen. I know you'll hate us, but this has nothing to do with Yi Chen. I'm the one in the wrong, you can blame me all you want, it doesn't matter..."

I curled myself up once more, my back facing them. I was too ashamed to even lift my head.

I don't blame them, there was nothing much to blame.

It's just that I... will never dare... to try again.

Long Way Home - Chapter 26

Just when I needed it, a notice came in about a company located in S city which had indicated their interest in me. I handled the procedures as quickly as I could & left the school and this city without informing Yi Chen.

I'm sorry.

But it's not like I have any other choice.

S city is a jubilant and fastidious city, however being someone who was not the least bit picky nor arrogant, I naturally felt at ease with the place. Especially since it was so far away from everything I had left behind. I could start anew and treat it as though my life before this had been but a clean slate. As of now, I only have the future to look forward to and nothing else.

How wonderful.

The company was great, most of my colleagues were full of youth and vigor, starting out from the basics wasn't too bad honestly. Facing a refreshingly tidy desk and computer, seeing the graceful yet gorgeous beauties and good-looking tall men come and go, making small talk and joking around when the director isn't around, and even catching myself laughing along heartily to those jokes, it was as though the word 'pain' had never been a part of my dictionary.

As long as they did not request too much from me, everything would be absolutely perfect. I was very much willing to work like this till the very end.

The moment I walked into the office, I saw DingDing's sulky face.

DingDing's surname was actually just 'Ding', but he had an uncanny resemblance to the main character from 'The Adventures of Tintin', therefore, having this nickname was unavoidable.

"What's up? Did ZhuSha reject you again?"

ZhuSha was the well-known beauty of our department. DingDing had put in as much effort as he could, which included sweet-talking, giving his utmost attention and of course, shamelessly sticking to her. However, most of the time, his efforts were futile, making him extremely frustrated.

"ZhuSha was wearing a skirt!" DingDing bitterly exclaimed, "And she even applied the \$39 lipstick!"

I remembered that lipstick. DingDing had once said that even if he could turn into Marilyn Monroe after applying it, he wouldn't ever pay a single cent for it.

"So what?" I was confused, "Weren't you the one who said it's a pity for her to wear only long pants because you can't see her long legs? You're not satisfied by the fact that she dressed up a little?"

"It's not as if she dolled herself up for me." DingDing gritted his teeth with an unpleasant expression, "It's because the new boss is coming in today."

"Huh?"

"Don't tell me you dozed off at last week's meeting again? Miss Lu was transferred back to the US branch so she had her brother take over her position here."

For every meeting each week, I would be diligently daydreaming or catching up on sleep. Anyway, even if there was something important, DingDing would be sure to spread it around the whole office one more time thanks to that big mouth of his.

"With ZhuSha's ethereal beauty, if by any chance the new boss takes an interest in her, then she'll be falling into the hands of a devil."

I cut him off in the middle of his rambling, "Maybe Miss Lu's brother happens to have a gene that causes him to look like a cyclops with a third eye on his forehead, it's hard to say whether or not she'll fancy him." Then again, it's not as if every man on this earth is the same as you.

"I know how he looks like," DingDing dejectedly replied, "he's actually quite handsome, only slightly losing out to me."

I coaxed him a little to chase him away, then finally sat down and started getting on with my work. Whilst holding a teacup, ZhuSha swayed past DingDing with her line of sight set on me, coming to a stop in front of me. "Yi Chen, can you help me key in these data? I'll treat you to lunch."

I glanced over at DingDing. "There's someone who would help you with this and treat you to lunch at the same time, why don't you ask him instead?"

ZhuSha willfully stuck out her tongue. "It's precisely because I don't want to eat with him, that's why I'm asking you. Please Yi Chen~"

Poor DingDing was about to lose his sanity.

The main door in the office abruptly opened, the director was standing at the door frame, talking to the person behind him, "Mr. Lu, this is the Department of Design."

We were all stunned. Initially, we had thought that we were going to greet him at the boss's office. Who would've thought he would personally come over to greet us?

DingDing was shocked, hurriedly going to the bathroom to fix his messily pulled out tie.

ZhuSha acted as though it was nothing and walked back to her seat. As for me, I was panicking; my table was stacked with a pile of messy reports that weren't even close to being done. I was also worried about having crumbs sticking on my face from the cake I had for breakfast earlier.

"These few here are the newcomers... Cheng Yi Chen."

I barely had time to quickly hide behind the computers to rub my mouth clean. Clumsily, I stood up, my eyes trained on the floor as I wore a smile on my face.

"He has just graduated from University X, but he's quite professional despite his young age..."

"Cheng...Yi Chen?"

His voice was soft, but the line resonated repeatedly in my head.

Perplexed, I lifted my head.

Translator: eiruuuuu

Proofreader: acupofmemory

Long Way Home - Chapter 27

Perplexed, I lifted my head.

Lu Feng.

Oh dear god, it's Lu Feng.

My vision blurred, then cleared, then blurred again. A feeling of slight dizziness and surreality.

Everyone runs on a track of time of their own, and for his and mine to overlap once again with this meeting was simply a bewildering coincidence.

I unconsciously took two steps forward, my posture stiff. Don't panic, don't panic. 5 years have passed, we've all grown up to become... strangers, there was no way we would be celebrating it emotionally by hugging and cheering. But then again, I didn't know what kind of reaction was considered to be normal.

Lu Feng stared at me, seemingly trying to figure out if I was the Cheng Yi Chen in his memories that he was familiar with.

However, I was probably unrecognisable now.

"Yi Chen," he spitted these two words in a choppy manner, as if it was terribly unfamiliar, but quickly laughed. "I would never have imagined we would meet again." He walked over, patting my shoulder with his left hand and extended his right hand.

With that gesture, there was no other choice besides shaking hands.

The surroundings erupted into a silenced frenzy. "The two of you know each other?" The director smiled gracefully.

"High school classmate, he used to be a really good friend of mine."

I pondered over his simple and quick introduction for a while before forcing it into my head.

Before the director had even fully escorted Lu Feng out of the office, DingDing couldn't bear it anymore. "Yi Chen, your luck is going to change for the better. You guys should quickly catch up at the welcoming party for him tonight."

I smiled awkwardly. "Idiot, we haven't talked in a few years... We weren't that close anyway... What is there to catch up on?"

Lu Feng stopped in his tracks, turning around to glance at me.

The grand welcoming reception was buffet-style, hence everyone was naturally relaxed as they would not have to watch out for the higher-ups' expressions while eating together at a large table.

People were mostly gathered in twos or threes to chat, and since DingDing, ZhuSha and I were new, we often stayed together. Not in the mood to stay between them and fight off insults or comments, I took my plate to a corner to eat quietly.

That pair of clowns can really go on bickering without rest.

"Yi Chen, you're so thin and you're still only eating salad. Here, I'll give you these." ZhuSha placed two golden roasted lamb meat and a chicken wing on my plate. DingDing's eyes almost popped out again.

I played with the apple and potato bits in my mouth for a while, unable to swallow them. Lu Feng wasn't far away, standing while politely socializing. He had really changed, he was no longer the same childish and rebellious kid who wore sports shoes and jeans. He would have never been capable of having this kind of serious expression.

And that finely-made suit. He would never have been able to stand all of this.

.....The current him would never use the pair of Italian suede shoes he's wearing to kick the wall or anyone.

Glancing at the talkative DingDing, I had a thought that he would say he wouldn't wish to live again if he knew the price of those shoes.

A person's cells would completely change after seven years, and that means, after seven years, the friend standing in front of you would have completely turned into a stranger. Our five years... would mean that we have changed about 70-80% of who we were. Five years ago, I would have wanted Lu Feng's everything and still be unsatisfied, but now, if I could just secretly watch him from the side like this, that would be enough.

"Why are you daydreaming alone here?"

"Huh?" It felt as if I had just been woken up from a dream. "No, there's still..." I then realised that DingDing and ZhuSha had unknowingly made a break for it.

Lu Feng sat down beside me, seemingly in deep thought as he played with the tall glass in his hand. Both of us had nothing to say.

"These past few years... Have you been doing well?"

It was the most cliché greeting, so I should have been able to answer it fluently. But all I could do was lower my head and stiffly say, "Good... I got into X University... And then I got a job here."

"I knew you would be able to get in." He laughed, then held my wrist causally. "You... Why are you still so thin?"

As if burned by fire, I retracted my hand fiercely.

The two of us stared at each other in shock and at a loss of words, which made the atmosphere turn awkward again.

Lu Feng coughed, then put his glass down. "Xiao Chen... The few years I've spent in America, I..."

He seemed to be struggling to find the right words to use.

"For a period of time, I really did forget about you..."

Although I was long mentally prepared for this, a loud snap sounded in my mind.

"You know, that kind of place, I had thought I would never be able to come back nor see you again, so..."

"I understand," I hurriedly cut him off, afraid of hearing more truths and cruel confessions, "I completely understand, so you don't have to continue!"

Lu Feng looked at me, his lips about to move again. Immediately, I took the chance to speak first, "Fiancée. How is your fiancée?"

He stiffened, then nodded his head. I quickly continued by myself, "She's really pretty, and comes from a good family, you two are really compatible. I saw the news, the engagement ceremony was really impressive... It won't be long before you guys get married right? Remember to invite me, after all, we were once... friends. I had already

saved up to buy the wedding gifts... Of course, I won't forget to send you an invitation for my wedding too, you must show up..."

I had no idea what I was talking about.

"You have a girlfriend already?"

When he was glowing so ever brightly with happiness, how could I have told him I was still single and lonely, and not only that but a closeted homosexual that no one was willing to love?

"Yes." I was smiling like a fool.

"Oh... Is she the long-haired lady from your department?"

I could not produce a coherent sound, so I simply nodded my head with the same foolish smile.

Long Way Home - Chapter 28

I went to work as usual, living peacefully, as if Lu Feng had never returned. A small employee like myself had no right nor need to cross paths with him, so although we were in the same building, we hardly met.

I had thought it was going to be a huge storm, but it was just a mere wave which quickly disappeared silently.

I'm happy, really.

I didn't have to work overtime on weekends, so I would usually sleep in, only waking up to find some food when I get hungry before going back to sleep. ZhuSha was extremely jealous of my pig-like lifestyle because I remained as thin as a monkey.

Just as I was sleeping soundly, I was abruptly woken up by my phone. Pained by the fact that I had forgotten to switch off my alarm, I randomly pressed my phone after finding it at the bedside. It became silent for a moment, then started ringing again.

I was about to pass out again, only after fumbling for a while then did I realise it was a phone call.

"Hello... What is it?" I couldn't even open my eyes, speaking tiredly, thinking it was either DingDing or ZhuSha looking for me to accompany them out to shop or laugh.

"You're still sleeping at this hour?"

The voice on the phone wasn't clear, and being drowsy, I couldn't guess who it was. "Yeah... I'm feeling sleepy."

The person on the other end chuckled. "Don't speak with this kind of voice, you'll easily invoke inappropriate thoughts."

I was immediately wide awake. Lu Feng.

"..." I didn't know whether I should call him by his name or call him boss.

"Are you free right now?"

Before I could register his words, he added, "If you do, come and help me fix my computer."

He... damn it, so what if you're the boss?

"I don't know how." After being woken up like this, even if you were the king, I wouldn't be polite.

"Wasn't your major in the IT field? If you can't even do this, how did you get a job in my company?"

"I learnt software design, not hardware maintenance."

"It's about the same, just come over."

Does he not know that different courses mean we learn totally different things?

I was still unwilling to get out of bed. "Tell me what's the problem, I'll guide you through the phone."

After being tormented for a long time, I became impatient. "If there's nothing important on it, just reformat it."

He fiddled with something for a while. "Hey, it says that the hard disk can't be reformatted."

I almost fell down, then frustratedly gave him more instructions. "Try rebooting it."

A strange noise sounded from the other end of the phone.

"...I can't... It seems like smoke is going to come of it..."

Just, just kill me now.

An hour later, I appeared in front of Lu Feng listlessly.

This person really has a problem, choosing to use such an old computer instead of his notebook.

"The memory card is loose." I was expressionless. "You should change the battery.... The fan's old, change it quickly or your hard disk will burn out, and..." I glared at him, "Who installed the anti-recovery software here?!"

Lu Feng simply smiled. I really wondered whether he's that much of an idiot when it comes to computers.

I sat down on the simple and low Nordic-style sofa, drinking the warm coffee he gave.

After freshening up, I couldn't bring myself to be impolite again; a sudden awkwardness filling me again as I faced him.

"This house is designed quite nicely." This was actually bullshit, because I knew absolutely nothing about interior design.

"My sister used to live here. Since I wanted to come back here, I just packed some things and left it as it is for now."

No wonder the room is coloured in that terrifying shade of pink.

I casually picked up a cushion on the sofa, but of all places, there was a black lace underwear under it.

We were both dumbfounded.

An image of Lu Feng messing around with a woman on this couch flashed in my mind, making me stand straight up uneasily.

"I'm going home."

"Don't misunderstand," Lu Feng argued, "This... This isn't mine..."

Of course you wouldn't be the one wearing this.

"My sister just throws her stuff everywhere, it has nothing to do with me."

Although Lu Feng has many flaws, he never lies.

After calming down, I found myself amusing. Even if it was proof of him fooling around with a woman, I had no right to feel agitated.

"...I thought it was your fiancée's." I laughed in slight mockery.

"Hers?" Lu Feng laughed lightly, "The truth is... In half a month, you'll see the news of our breakup."

I was stunned.

"It's just a business matter. Our engagement was just supposed to solidify the trust of the stockholders in us then," his tone was relaxed, "We both know we're just acting, so there isn't any lying involved. Nobody will be hurt. After helping with such a big favour, my father sent me back here with some money, it was a good deal."

Nobody will be hurt.

Then what about me?

Ah, right, I almost forgot.

I had long lost the right and position to be hurt in his place.

"Let's have a meal together."

"No, I'm not hungry..." I shouldn't... I can't wish foolishly for anything more to happen now. But those shameless thoughts would slip out of my control whenever I'm near him. I should... stay a distance away from him.

"Unless you have eaten lunch, just listen to what I say and go with me. Stop making excuses."

Famous restaurants are naturally packed with people on the weekends, but we still managed to get a table, not only that, but one that was reserved.

I glanced at Lu Feng, his face was expressionless as he causally looked through the menu.

"What do you want to eat?"

I would never reply with "anything". After looking through the menu twice, I ordered a plate of mixed vegetables, tofu and the soup of the day. The prices of these simple dishes were already frightening enough, I would never order something like the roasted pork shoulder with those figures beside it.

Lu Feng rolled his eyes before giving a deadly glare. "I'm not asking you to pay, what are you afraid of? That frugal way of thinking you have wouldn't change even in a hundred years, would it?"

In a fit of anger, I ordered a huge lobster, fish, and the pork shoulders that seemed to be as big as a bear's feces after it was served.

Drinking the soup had made me feel as hot as a bun that had just came out fresh from the oven. Just as I was peeling the skin of the red translucent shrimp in my hands, someone gave me a fierce pat on my back, making me drop the shrimp in my mouth.

Turning around, I found that it was indeed DingDing and ZhuSha.

"What are you guys doing trying to murder someone in public like this?"

"Am I mistaken? You're actually spending your time here instead of cooking instant noodles at home?" DingDing made a dizzy gesture. "When I saw you just now, I thought I was seeing things."

"We came too late, there's no more seats. You're taking up an entire table by yourself, what a waste of space, just let us sit with you for a while."

I bit down on the shrimp, pointing at the empty seat opposite me while mumbling, "There's someone sitting there, he just went to the washroom."

"A friend? That's fine, four people can still fit." They were real sharp, immediately pulling out the chairs and taking a seat. ZhuSha sat beside me, while DingDing sat across her, right beside Lu Feng's seat.

They then began ordering their food as I silently ate.

As expected, Lu Feng was a little surprised to see them when he returned, on the other hand, the two of them seemed ready to jump out of their seats and run.

"You jerk, why didn't you say it was the boss earlier on? I'll get you back tomorrow!" ZhuSha lowered her voice, mercilessly stepping on my foot.

Speechless, I continued eating.

Lu Feng recognised ZhuSha, his expression tightening as he politely greeted them.

The dishes they ordered soon arrived, and as everyone ate and drank together, the atmosphere gradually became warmer.

Lu Feng wasn't trying to be a snob, it's just that he doesn't like to force himself to make others feel welcome. But since everyone got along well, he slowly relaxed.

DingDing would never forget to make his offerings to his ZhuSha goddess when he can, so even when the boss was sitting right beside him, he still constantly gave her food by placing them in her bowl, helping her to pick out the bones from the fish. I was embarrassed even watching from the side. Lu Feng's face was one of astonishment as he turned to gaze at me from time to time to see what my reaction was.

I quietly took another shrimp.

Lu Feng's expression slowly stiffened again; it seems that their intimate actions and my indifference was getting to him.

DingDing then took a paper towel and wiped the sauce on ZhuSha's mouth.

I was just about to remind DingDing to behave himself in front of the boss when Lu Feng slammed his chopsticks down, his tone frighteningly low. "What are you guys doing?!"

DingDing was shocked, clutching the paper towel in a panic. ZhuSha was equally lost and frightened.

"Are you really Xiao Chen's girlfriend?! How can you flirt with another man right in front of him?!"

The shrimp I was holding almost fell into the soup again.

Long Way Home - Chapter 30

DingDing looked at me as if he was ready to kill.

"There's no such thing," I softly argued.

"You told Boss that I'm your girlfriend?" ZhuSha asked curiously, "Could it be that you have been admiring me secretly all this while and I haven't noticed? What a shame, why didn't you say so earlier..."

"No..." I wished I could grow two more mouths right then. DingDing seemed ready to pounce over any second.

"Cheng Yi Chen, you despicable man!"

DingDing ah, I... I didn't know whether I should smile or cry. "You have to believe me, I really don't have any feelings for your ZhuSha."

"To think I regarded you as a friend, I really have a bad eye when it comes to people!" DingDing was still firing away by himself.

ZhuSha was still gloating over my misfortune as she smiled widely. "Yi Chen, if you really have a thing for me, say so quickly, I'll definitely choose you between the two of you."

If I still don't make a solemn swear to the skies, I might as well hang myself right now.

"I swear that if I, Cheng Yi Chen, had any feelings for Miss ZhuSha in this lifetime, I'll %^&*%\$%%*\$%%\$..."

Although it was going to be hard to explain this to Lu Feng who was wearing an incomprehensible expression on his face, DingDing was not someone to offend.

After listening to a round of vicious, terrible and unimaginable curses, DingDing calmed down slightly, but still remained suspicious. "Then why did Boss say..."

"He was just joking, it's all a misunderstanding," I said quietly. Lu Feng's line of vision landed on me at this, making me feel somewhat embarrassed. "I, I'm going to the washroom for a minute."

Who knew, after sulking for a few minutes in front of the sink, the image I returned to had changed completely. The three people who seemed cold and unapproachable earlier were all warmly chatting away.

Once I sat down, ZhuSha and DingDing immediately spoke at the same time, "Yi Chen, tell him!"

"Wh-what?" I was a little slow.

"Tell him whether you have a girlfriend or not."

I was speechless. "Why do I..."

"He didn't believe us when we said you're single, so we made a bet with him. Whoever loses will have to pay for this meal!"

I stamped my feet silently as I felt a headache coming.

I had initially wanted to tell Lu Feng that my girlfriend was not ZhuSha, but someone else. But how can I do that now?

"Come on!" The two of them looked at me excitedly. Lu Feng tapped his long slender fingers on the table, his face wearing a slight smile.

I evaluated the dishes on the table again, trying to estimate the price.

If I say yes, I might not make it out of here alive.

I weakly shook my head, feeling a dull pain from the headache that had come.

Lu Feng smiled, then took out his credit card to make payment.

The two of them cheered together. I wished I could push them down from the eighth floor right there and then.

Whilst sitting in Lu Feng's car, I felt extremely uncomfortable. I was afraid he would ask me why I lied.

I didn't want him to know how pathetically I was living.

Thankfully, he didn't say a word.

After driving for a while, he spoke in a casual tone, "Let's go to your place and take a look."

"Ah?" I was extremely awkward. "I live in a small and old place, there isn't anything much to do there, it's better if we don't..."

"Is this how you treat your guests?" He raised his brows slightly.

"No..." I had lost the ability to speak coherently. "...Then, you'll have to wait for ten minutes at the door before you can go in."

Ten minutes was only enough for me to straighten the crumpled bedsheets, stack my blankets up neatly, clean up the trash on the floor and dump them into the bin, wipe the table, arrange my books, curl up my worn pajamas, underwear and socks into a ball before throwing them into the bathroom, and spray the house with an air freshener in the last few seconds.

"You wouldn't have used this ten minutes to throw some woman you have secretly hidden out of the window, would you?" Lu Feng smiled as he walked in.

My face turned a deep red. His house would probably be ten times messier than mine if he didn't hire people to clean it for him.

"Are you sharing it with anyone?"

"Yeah, someone from the company. But he hardly stays here."

That fella pays the rent but doesn't ever stay in his room. Most of the time, he was at his girlfriend's. But the few times he brought his girlfriend home with him was more than enough for me. A house with only two rooms with such thin walls allowed me to hear

everything in the next room clearly. The noise they made could only be covered by listening to Japanese heavy metal rock with my earphones. Amazing...

The old sofa, television, radio and a few other things in the living room belonged to the landlord. The sofa was just about as comfortable as the floor as it completely sank in. If we wanted to watch the television, we'll have to wait for an hour for it to start up. If we wanted to use it as a radio to listen to the sound only, it'll take only half an hour. We had tried everything. I had always wanted to throw these useless things out to make space for my increasing pile of books and CDs, but I was afraid that the landlord would have something to say about that when I stopped renting it in the future, so I had no choice but to pile them all up in a corner.

Lu Feng took in the sight with a silent smile.

He was well-fed, having neither suffered nor starved before. He would have no idea how frighteningly high the rent was around here. My first salary after graduating was not that high, so to be able to stay in a place like this was already considered good enough.

"Let's watch something," he said cheerfully.

We had passed by a video rental store just now, so I rented a few new and old films back in case he was bored. I couldn't possibly have asked him to read some books while listening to music or use the computer and go chatting online.

In my opinion, besides Schindler's List, the rest weren't worth watching. Even though I had watched it a few times before, I was willing to watch it again. Initially, I was worried that someone who valued quality like Lu Feng would find a black and white movie like that boring, perhaps even yawning through the entire film, but surprisingly, he did not fall asleep, and in fact, gave it his utmost attention.

"This is the true style of a great filmmaker." I tsked. "It's not in the least bit emotional, the more it wants the audience to feel pained, the colder the shot taken."

"I have always looked down on those who sobbed painfully." Lu Feng disapprovingly skipped the remaining crying and weeping scenes. "Real pain wouldn't be so easily expressed through crying." He gritted his teeth. "It... wouldn't even be something that can be expressed in words... such as..."

Long Way Home - Chapter 31

He paused. We suddenly heard the sound coming from the outside that we had previously neglected.

It was raining, and there were flashes of lightning. The wind seemed to be blowing fiercely as well.

"Stupid weather," he murmured.

It was past dinnertime, and we were both hungry, but going out to eat or calling for delivery wasn't convenient, so we just had to make our own meal.

I took out a few packs of instant noodles I found. "This... Can you eat this?"

"As long as I don't have to make it myself, I can eat anything."

The kitchen was merely for display as it was used to store various bits and bobs. As a single man, where would one find the interest in cooking dishes and making soup? I merely bought an electric cooker and placed it in the corner of my room to cook myself some noodles at times.

There were only eggs, a few tomatoes that I usually ate as fruits to make sure I get my vitamins, and some old and dried mushrooms that I dug out after searching for a while. There wasn't even ham, so I just had to work with what I had.

I boiled the water, soaked the mushrooms, beat the egg, cut the tomatoes, and perhaps because my skills had improved after eating instant noodles so many times, it actually looked presentable. Besides the lack of colours, I was still rather satisfied with the product.

I called for Lu Feng to eat, and then was momentarily baffled. My laziness was amazing; I had always ate from the pot, never once did I have the thought of even putting in a bowl. I couldn't possibly put the noodles in a drinking cup for him to eat, could I?

"Let's just eat from the pot together." Lu Feng was surprisingly generous.

I gave him the chopsticks while I used the spoon. We then sat down and started on "Master Kang's Ribs Noodles".

We ate slowly, our chopsticks and spoon occasionally meeting, giving out a small clinking sound. The noodles were hot, the steam continuously rising, making my vision slightly blurry.

To be able to share a pot of noodles with the person that I liked was more than enough for me. Happiness was something small and subtle like this, I didn't dare wish for more anymore.

"Give me the spoon."

"Huh?"

"What 'huh', do you want me to drink the soup with these chopsticks?"

I blankly watched him as he took the spoon and sent it into his mouth.

"Mm, the soup is good. To be able to cook instant noodles like this isn't easy either. Xiao Chen, you can just cook instant noodles for me for the rest of your life."

"It's just instant noodles, it's only meant for filing your stomach once in a while, how can you eat this for the rest of your life?" I giggled. "In the future, there will be someone who will cook the best meals for you everyday." Who am I to be compared to that 'someone' then?

After eating, we watched some movies again. The rain was still not showing any sign of

stopping, but it was indeed quite late. Lu Feng looked at his watch, then the window. "You wouldn't mind if I stayed here tonight, would you?"

"Huh?" I quickly shook my head. "I won't, I won't."

It was just that it was a little too shabby; thankfully, although my bed was messy, it was clean and void of any strange smells. The air-conditioner in the bedroom that was either second-hand or third-hand usually sounded as if there was a generator hidden somewhere when it was switched on, the sound it created was a lot louder than the heat it generated. Hopefully, it'll work normally, oh, no, work extraordinarily tonight lest Lu Feng gets a shock.

I found Lu Feng a set of clean pajamas, heated the water for him to bathe and tidied the bed before going into the next room and sweeping the dust off the bed, ready to spend a night there.

After lying in bed for a while, I was still unable to sleep. It was probably because it was too cold. That fella's blankets were too thin, I really couldn't understand how he could bear the cold. But... with two people... I guess I can understand.

"Xiao Chen, Xiao Chen."

Just as I was drifting off slightly, I heard Lu Feng calling me. I was immediately awake. "What is it?"

"The air-conditioner seems to have broken down."

Damn it, we rarely have guests here, and you still dare play around and go on a strike today.

I jumped out of bed and wore my slippers before hurrying over. Lu Feng was waiting for me at the door. My pajamas looked small on him, the 10cm difference in height between us wasn't for nothing. He didn't have to even try buttoning his top, simply allowing it to fall loosely, revealing his chest. I didn't dare to look any longer, so I entered the room and picked up the remote control left on the bed before trying the various buttons.

Huh?

"...It's not spoiled. Look, it responds. The temperature will slowly go up..."

Everything came to a stop.

I heard the sound of the door locking behind me.

Long Way Home - Chapter 32 (M)

I heard the sound of the door locking behind me.

My body stiffened, unable to move.

I felt him getting closer to me from behind, and then a hand on my waist.

"I'm... going back to bed." I hurriedly moved away, turning to leave. "Rest well."

Just as I took half a step forward, an arm wrapped around my waist, forcefully hugging me.

"You, you... what do you want..." I could no longer speak coherently, anxiously struggling to break free. I didn't dare look up to face him, I was scared, really scared... to the point of trembling.

He wordlessly grabbed my jaw, lifting it up forcefully before kissing me strongly.

"No..." I clenched my teeth tightly, not willing to relax. I was barely holding on. He firmly pinched my jaw down, forcing my mouth open, his tongue roughly entering, swiftly intertwining with mine as he brutally and repeatedly sucked.

Not this... I can't do this with him again...

I continued struggling with both legs, desperately pushing him away as best as I could. No, how can you treat me like this again... It's over between us, how can you...

My tongue and lips were stinging in pain. He finally let go, then proceeded to bite me on my neck.

"Don't!" His hand probed into my pajamas, his large strength terrifying. I desperately wanted to stop the hands pressing on my chest. "No... Let go..." I could hear the tears in my voice.

Without any difficulty, he pressed me down on the bed, kissing me again without a word. My hands were held down at both sides of my head, even as I helplessly struggled, I was still firmly pressed down.

When a metallic sweetness filled my mouth, he then moved his lips away, staring straight at me. "Why?"

I didn't even have the strength to swallow the saliva that had trickled out from the corner of my mouth.

"Why... did you lie to me?" He lowered his head again, kissing my lips, but a lot more gently this time. Once, twice... "You clearly don't have a girlfriend... But you still lied to me? Why?"

Trembling, I looked up at him.

"You still care about me, don't you?"

I stiffened up, then began struggling again. "I don't... I don't..."

"Don't lie to me..." He reached out and pulled apart my messy pajamas. "You clearly... haven't forgotten about me..."

"No... It's not what you think..." Our bare bodies rubbed against each other

vigorously, throwing me into a state of confusion. "Don't..."

My pants were taken off as well as I desperately resisted. "We can't... We're no longer..."

If he crosses even this last line of defense, then in front of this man... I would really have no ability to protect myself any longer.

"I missed you so much." He pressed himself tightly against me, making my last line of defense fade away to nothing as he pushed in between my legs. "Xiao Chen... I missed you so much..."

Sniffling, I looked at him with swollen eyes. Why does his face look so terribly blurred?

"Let's get together, okay?"

"....." It's getting more blurred...

"Don't cry... Let's get together again, okay?"

"....."

"Okay?"

I choked up. "No... Lu Feng, Lu Feng..."

You can choose to not love me, but... don't play with me like this, I, I... can't bear the pain again...

My legs were lifted up again as he entered slowly.

I could hear myself let out a soft catlike whimper.

A sudden impact that followed made me grab his shoulders tightly, almost on the verge of tears. "Don't... It's too terrifying..."

"Be good, it's going to be fine..." His hips started moving vigorously, his movements getting stronger and stronger. "Xiao Chen... Xiao... Chen..."

My nails were already digging into his skin. I shook my head continuously, struggling about in an attempt to reduce the unbearable pain. "Don't..."

My back rubbed repeatedly against the mattress, my breathing ragged. Before my legs were pressed in front of my chest, his hand reached behind my waist to serve as a form of support. I couldn't even make the slightest move to avoid it, his movements close to brutal, my back arching till it almost broke.

"Lu Feng, Lu Feng... Please stop..." Besides shouting and crying, it felt like there was nothing else I was capable of.

"Be good..." He lowered his head and attacked my lips; they were bleeding again.

"You're reacting... Why are you still lying to me? Why?!"

He began sucking on my lips, making it hard to breathe. The pain from a sudden thrust made me want to scream, but I couldn't make a sound.

I couldn't open my eyes, my body shivering.

"Xiao Chen... Xiao Chen..."

My senses were in a state of chaos, my body shaking as I couldn't even hold on to his shoulders. A sudden warmth then filled me, making me break out in goosebumps.

Panting, Lu Feng stopped. My body tightened up, shivering immensely.

"Xiao Chen..." He stayed in the same position, still unwilling to break away. Moving my hands away, he caressed my face before sweeping my sweat-drenched hair away, softly touching my tear-stained face. "Are you okay?"

I didn't know, I really didn't know. To engage in such intimacy with him, my heart felt like it was about to burst.

From head to toe, my body wasn't listening to me anymore. I couldn't think of anything, nor could I remember anything.

I could only helplessly wrap my fingers around his arm.

Grab ahold of this man.

Lu Feng, Lu Feng, are you... are you... really serious about me? Will you... never leave me again?

Another passionate kiss. I no longer have the strength nor courage to do a thing, allowing him to explore with my mouth open. I could feel him kissing more and more harshly, throwing me into a state of frenzy as I clumsily sucked on his tongue.

The large frame pressing against me shuddered.

I was suddenly lifted and flipped on my back, and before I could recover from my dizziness, the huge impact that followed made me grab the bedsheets tightly.

Lu Feng's tall and large frame landed strongly on me from the back, his chest tightly pressed against my back as he moved aggressively. My body was swayed back and forth with his movements, rendered completely useless.

Biting onto the bedsheets, I muffled my sobs.

"Is it painful?" His hands reached to the front, one trailing my chest while the other moved down and grabbed ahold of my growing yet unreleased desire.

".....Don't..." I could no longer hold onto the bedsheets, blindly shaking my head. I couldn't hold back under his skilled and teasing hands. And there were still the vigorous movements from the back.

"Mm.... No... Plea-"

The moment came shortly, his hand skillfully receiving.

I shut my eyes tightly, my breathing came out in short, heavy pants. He smeared his wet and sticky hand on my chest, all the while biting on my sweat-drenched back.

His biting got more and more painful, at the same time, I could feel his excitement expanding again within me.

"Don't..." I hopelessly struggled. I was too tired, my lower body feeling slightly numb. No more...

"But this isn't enough for me..." He turned my head over slightly, then kissed me again. "Xiao Chen... I can't control myself... I want you..."

His body kept heating up, as if it was about to melt and burn at the same time.

"Anyone would wish to do it with someone they like, and that goes for me too... I... can't resist. I'm really happy to be able to do it with you... I hope you will be as happy as me too."

A long time ago, you said this to me too, didn't you?

If so... Can I think that... you still love me now?

I... I, If I am happy, will you... feel the same?

If, If I still love you now, will you... feel the same?

Long Way Home - Chapter 33

Waking up, I could feel a sore pain stretching throughout my body. I was still in a trance. It felt like I had just dreamt a long and tiring dream. Lu Feng wasn't around. After wearing my clothes and looking at the alarm clock, I realised that my hopes for a bonus with my full attendance were dashed, so I might as well spend the reminding time daydreaming.

Lu Feng had left a note, and a bulky set of keys. His words were as usual, straightforward. "I'm going back to the company first, I'll let you take the day off." A space, then another line of words. "Move in and stay with me."

To return to his side had always been a small and secret dream of mine.

But the day may come where I would have to return these keys and lug my luggage out after being chased out of the house.

He had already abandoned me once, the second time would probably be even easier.

But I didn't know if I could continue living if I experienced something like that again.

In the heat of the moment, making mistakes was fine, but after waking up with a clear mind and thinking it through, I couldn't take it as a fairytale, I had to see it as a reality. My mind cleared as I thought about it more, my courage nowhere to be seen, yet, I couldn't bear to return the keys to him. Instead, I hid them in the drawer with the ring and locked it up, only taking them out before I sleep to look at these treasures.

Lu Feng didn't take the initiative to come and look for me; I knew he was trying to keep his cool whilst waiting for my reply.

Be it a nod or a shake of the head, both decisions required too much courage, I didn't dare to take a step in any direction.

After hiding for about half a month's time, I had become shockingly thin. ZhuSha had secretly brought a tape measure and forced me to take my measurements, my waist measuring about 60cm, the effects better than any kind of slimming pills she had tried. Seeing my small figure, ZhuSha was extremely envious.

After we knocked off, because it was payday, ZhuSha went around asking people to eat Japanese food together. We had always been like this, spending our money generously at the start of the month till the point that at the end of the month, even when it came to instant noodles, we had to pick the cheapest ones to eat.

"You, you, you, you, you, none of you are getting away." This woman chose a few of us in an imposing manner, of course, that included DingDing and me.

"Can I not order any dishes and choose to eat the 100 yuan per person buffet instead?" I smiled bitterly. "I want to save some money to upgrade my computer. I only managed to save fifty cents last month..."

"Just eat what the Queen tells you to, stop with your nonsense!"

DingDing the suck-up.

After arguing for some time, we finally stepped out of the company, and was immediately greeted by a dark blue BMW that sat in the middle of the road, as if waiting for someone. Everyone could recognise that it was the boss' car.

Subconsciously, I hid behind DingDing.

However, that bastard immediately flew in front of ZhuSha and blocked her. "ZhuSha, you said we would eat together, if he asks you out for dinner, you can't agree to his request!"

His sincere words were received well by ZhuSha. "You're crazy!"

Lu Feng walked towards us and politely greeted everyone, his eyes on me. "I have something to discuss with Yi Chen."

I shrank back slightly, but my arm was easily grabbed by him. "Let's talk in the car."

"We have already agreed to go for dinner together!" I quickly gestured towards the group of people.

"Oh? I haven't eaten dinner either, let's go together then, I'll treat you guys to a meal."

"No thank you, no thank you." The group of them were surprisingly cooperative. "If the two of you have matters to discuss, then we'll go first." With that, they left in a hurry.

A meal between colleagues can only be enjoyed because of the atmosphere, if the boss were to randomly give a treat, the atmosphere would turn tense. Everyone knew this well.

"You were planning to eat Japanese food right? Then let's go to a Japanese restaurant." Lu Feng drove calmly, his rolled-up sleeves revealing his strong and slender arms. Perhaps it was because the heater in the car was working too well, my palms started sweating. I knew too well how strong the body hidden under that silk shirt was. It was hard not to feel nervous being this close.

"Don't bother, I can just buy some fast food on the way home... I still have to write a proposal when I get back..."

He continued driving as if he hadn't heard a word.

Long Way Home - Chapter 34 (M)

He asked for a private room. The waitress who wore a kimono knelt down and served the food in a respectful manner before exiting the room, bowing as she closed the paper door.

"Manners after manners, I can't stand it," Lu Feng complained. He was obviously not interested in learning about the Japanese culture.

After kneeling for about thirty seconds, he readjusted his posture again, lazily straightening his legs, his feet accidentally touching my knee in the process. Instead of retracting it, he mischievously placed it between my legs.

Shocked, I moved backwards to get away from him.

Lu Feng raised his eyebrows. "You're avoiding me?"

"No..." I would be an idiot to admit this.

"Then come over here." He patted the space beside him. "Don't sit so far away."

Bracing myself, I moved over and sat next to him. I was at a loss as to where I should put my hands and legs.

"Aren't you hungry? Why aren't you eating anything?"

Under Young Master Lu's command, I started eating nonstop robotically.

"Drink some alcohol."

"Okay..."

My mouth was full, but I still took the small and shiny cup from him.

After chugging down a few cups, my face slowly started burning up.

At this, Lu Feng wrapped his hand around my waist in a natural manner. "Hey, your face has turned red."

This line was said right next to my ear. My hands trembled, causing the sake in the cup to spill over.

"I'm sorry..."

Seeing the alcohol stain spreading rapidly on Lu Feng's trousers, I couldn't help but scream internally. Oh god, this pair of trousers could cost me a month's salary!

Panicked, I hastily grabbed some tissues and started rubbing away at the stain on his thighs in an attempt to save the situation. As I continued rubbing it, my hands accidentally made contact with the area where it was growing hard.

Lu Feng watched me hurriedly withdraw my hands, then gave me a cunning smirk. "What's the matter?"

"....."

He leaned closer, his breath hitting against my face. Just I was about to speak, my lips were completely sealed off. He hoisted me up by my waist, pulling my legs apart as he placed me on his waist.

He didn't hide his passion in the sudden kiss, his tongue fiercely entangling itself with mine, one hand probing into my coat while the other had already undone my belt.

"No." I moved my lips away with great difficulty as I struggled to grab his hands that were wrecking havoc on me. "Don't be like this..."

"What are you afraid of? No one's going to come in." Lu Feng was still able to remain calm in a situation like this, pulling my thin sweater up to my chest in no time before leaning down to give it a few light pecks, his skillful hands slipping into my loosened pants to grab my butt.

"Don't..."

In the midst of his half-forced kisses and touches, my body had started reacting in the same way as his, but there was something about my rationality that continued to refuse his advancements stubbornly. I struggled continuously, making him irritated. Pinning my waist down, he hoisted me up roughly, preparing to enter.

"I don't want this!" I used all my strength to push him away, kicking and hitting him

in order to escape it.

"Behave yourself."

"No, I don't want this!"

Probably realising that I was resisting a lot more strongly and seriously this time, Lu Feng stopped. Staring at me emotionlessly for a while, he finally released me. "Why?"

I got down from his legs in a sorry state; I didn't even have the energy to stand as I resorted to kneeling and squatting down to pull my pants up.

"Why? Are you not willing to get back together with me?"

His cold tone reminded me of our first time. A thin layer of cold sweat started to form.

I can't argue with him, I definitely can't argue with him again.

"It's not that..."

"Do you want to start over together or not?" He was emphasising every single word.

"I don't know..." With a lack of confidence, I gave a soft answer. I lowered my head, unsure whether it was because of guilt or the weariness from struggling with my own thoughts. "Give me a little more time... Let me think about it, okay?"

"What is there to think about?" Lu Feng was slightly angered. "It's either a yes or no, is it that hard to give an answer?"

"....."

He wore his clothes silently, obviously trying to calm himself down. "I won't bother you. Give me a call after you have thought it through, okay?"

He reached out and tousled my hair roughly, making it untidy.

It's not that I don't want to start over, I just don't dare to.

If I fall again after taking this step, I'm afraid that I'll never be able to get back up on my feet again.

Translator's note: My copy of the novel has arrived! From now on, I won't be using the online version to translate and will be using the actual (hardcopy) book itself so it will definitely follow Lan Lin's version of the story better as she has mentioned the online ones are neither legal nor accurate. Besides that, she has made some plot changes in this newly published version of the book, and I do believe they are changes for the better (and a lot more reasonable), so I'll translate accordingly!

DingDing was getting a scolding from ZhuSha again.

"The boss merely said a few more words to you, and you're already this proud! Look at Yi Chen, regardless of anything, he remains indifferent, look how different you are from him! A minor character will always stay as a minor character; if there's anyone that'll have to die first or stay at the sides as an onlooker, it'll be you! You'll never be able to grow to become a main lead!"

Although he was getting scolded, DingDing still had a look of bliss on his face. It was exactly because he loved getting scolded by ZhuSha; no matter how much dignity a man has, one can't help but melt in front of the woman they love.

After receiving the scolding, he still happily went out to get some yoghurt for his goddess. The manager wasn't in, so everyone went about doing their own things, and having been long used to this sequence of events, no one bothered to step in.

ZhuSha, along with her expensive dress, came to sit on my table. "Yi Chen, accompany me out to eat some ice cream fondue after work."

I didn't even raise my head. "Have mercy on me, and have mercy on DingDing too."

"DingDing barely has any strengths to speak of, he is nowhere as interesting as you."

That's because I don't try to get close to women.

"What do you mean he doesn't have any strengths? After chasing you for so long, he has probably read more than an entire shelf of books about women. He's probably as good as a specialist in Women's Studies now." I was clear that ZhuSha had no feelings for me. She was just disappointed that DingDing was so bland and uninteresting*, but was all the same, unwilling to simply throw him away, hoping that he'll improve himself.

"Besides giving me flowers and treating me, there's nothing else he knows."

"To have someone do these two tasks constantly for you is already extremely rare, what more do you want?" The human heart is indeed greedy. "Do you want him to kill for you or launch a satellite into space?"

ZhuSha's expression was still one filled with regret. "It would be so meaningless to just get together with him like this. There's no one fighting over him with me, so there wouldn't be a sense of self-accomplishment in getting into this relationship."

So, a man's worth is actually measured by the amount of competition.

"There's more men than women in our department, how about letting a man fight for DingDing with you?"

"Hey..."

I was too lazy to look at her getting lost in her own fantasies. "Then again, it's not entirely true that he doesn't have any admirers. Yesterday, the sweet-looking girl from the Sales department asked me about DingDing."

"Which one?" ZhuSha was suddenly alert.

"The one that has a "Xin" in her name, she's Hu Zi's junior. She's the one that chatted quite happily with DingDing the last time she came to look for Hu Zi."

"Are you talking about the one that looks like a fox?" It was hard to tell whether ZhuSha's expression was one of worry or happiness. "The one whose eyes are a little droopy, and even has single eyelids?"

...It's basically impossible for her to describe other women well.

I allowed her to continue sitting on my table as she basked in her own excitement.

DingDing, who returned with two cups of yoghurt in his hands, noticed that ZhuSha had greatly upped her treatment of him. After ZhuSha took the yoghurt from him and started eating, she suddenly said to him, "Let's watch a movie tonight."

Poor DingDing was so happy that he could only continue rubbing his hands together in joy, almost suspecting that the sun had risen from all directions. He had always been the one chasing after ZhuSha, giving her gifts and treating her, but the day had finally come where his hard work was being reciprocated.

In the following days, DingDing was as happy as a lark; his temper was extremely good as well. Seeing that fortune indeed favours fools, I could not help but feel envious. "The two of you better not burn the bridge after crossing it** and fly off like a pair of lovebirds while leaving me behind."

As usual, DingDing smiled foolishly. "Oh right, Yi Chen, no matter how young you are, you should be reaching the age where you'll crave some love in your life, aren't you? Why am I not hearing anything from you?"

This bastard, bothering himself with other people's matters after settling his.

"I'm afraid I'll end up heartbroken."

Although it sounded like a joke, it was actually the truth.

"Hmph, you're afraid of getting into a car accident too, so why are you still driving everyday?"

"If it was a car accident, it would still be better since everything would be over in an instant, but to be dumped by someone, that feeling isn't something easy to bear."

"Seeing your usual chic character, I never thought you'll be this petty about matters like these." DingDing rolled his eyes at me. "If I were to worry so much like you, I would probably not be able to even lay a finger on ZhuSha's clothes by now."

"Opportunities only present themselves in front of those who are ready, and happiness only presents itself to those who have courage." This bastard had suddenly become an eloquent speaker, and seemed extremely proud of himself.

"DingDing..." I hesitated for a moment, then continued, "If your ex... left you, then

came back and confessed to you now, would you accept it?"

"Do you love her?"

I nodded my head.

"Then that's all the answer you need, do I need to say any more? As long as the two of you love each other, why would there be a reason to reject?"

"There was a period of time where he*** had really lost all feelings for me."

"So you mind that, and you can't get over it?"

"I'm not angry about it, I'm just afraid he'll get tired of me again."

"I don't understand your thinking," DingDing shook his head. "Why do you want to make such a simple thing so complicated? As long as the two of you love each other, isn't that good enough?"

"It's that simple?"

"Or else? How complicated do you want it to get?" DingDing looked at me in disbelief. "With this level of knowledge you have on love, how dare you guide me on ways to win ZhuSha over in the past?! No wonder I've only succeeded now!"

This ungrateful bastard...

DingDing's speech didn't actually manage to convince me.

But, Lu Feng, I still want to place my bet on you one more time.

With my remaining courage and luck, I shall gamble one more time.

Can you bring me happiness? Especially after I've gone all in this time?

*chinese phrase used here was "鸡肋, 食之无味 弃之可惜" translates literally to chicken ribs, tasteless but a shame to discard -> means that someone is of little value and interest but would be a shame to dismiss

**chinese phrase used here was "过河拆桥" which means to be ungrateful and cast someone aside after they have served their purpose

***as I mentioned before, the Chinese words for "he" and "she" have the same pronunciation so when spoken, the pronouns aren't clear

Long Way Home - Chapter 36

I took both the keys and the ring out from the drawer. The silver ring had become a little small, and it took some effort before I managed to slip it on my finger. It didn't seemed to fit well, but I still looked at it over and over again, treating it preciously as though wearing it would return me to the better days of the past. I realised that Lu Feng's phone was off after calling as I was redirected to his voicemail.

I tried calling his home number, but no one answered for a long time, so I hung up after I heard the automated voice asking me to leave a message.

If he wasn't at home, he was probably out meeting clients.

However, the desire to take a look at his place was still too strong. It's fine if he isn't around, I'll just take a quick look around the place.

When I reached the door of his condominium with the keys in hand, I was actually a little nervous, taking a while before I managed to fit the keys into the keyhole. The finely-made door didn't make a single sound when it was unlocked. I took a deep breath, pushed the door open, and took a step forward.

One step, I had taken just one step, but that was enough for me to see the two people snuggling on the Nordic-style sofa.

For a moment there, I had suspected that it was merely a figment of my imagination, but between the two, the fair and broad back I saw definitely belonged to Lu Feng.

I blankly remained in my position with one leg extended forward.

Maybe I should have done something else so that I wouldn't have looked so shocked and pathetic, but besides staring blankly, I was incapable of doing anything else.

Lu Feng was the first to lift his head up, and seeing my frozen self, he stiffened as well. "Xiao Chen?"

At this, I finally snapped out of my trance as I quickly released my hold on the keys that were still inserted in the keyhole before hurriedly turning around to leave.

My arms and legs had fallen asleep, so I really couldn't run. Instead, I tried my best in walking as fast as I could.

I really had to thank the heavens that these apartments were separate units so there wouldn't be a possibility of me rolling down the stairs in such a sorry state again.

"Xiao Chen, Xiao Chen! Wait!"

I was already about to walk out from the front yard.

"Let me explain!"

Lu Feng was extremely strong. With one pull of my wrist, it started to ache in pain, as if it was about to dislocate.

"Let me explain..."

I was forced to turn around, my eyes greeting him in panic.

His face was covered in sweat, his breath reeked of alcohol. "Xiao Chen..."

I didn't make a sound, nor did I move.

I was waiting for his explanation.

To tell the truth, I was hoping, more so than him, that there was a reasonable-sounding explanation for this. As long as he was able to make it sound legitimate, I was willing to be deceived.

I can play dumb, believe anything you say, as long as you don't stab me straight in the heart again, anything's fine.

He caught his breath, then said, "I thought you weren't ever coming, so..."

"Lu Feng!" I shouted, cutting him off.

My mind was spinning terribly, my vision going black as a dryness crawled into my mouth and throat. I could only swallow my saliva to make my voice come out more clearly. "If you're looking for someone to bed, then I'm definitely not suitable. It is, indeed, better for you to look for someone else."

The ring on my finger was too tight. I gritted my teeth and pulled at it, scraping my skin in the process before I managed to pull it out.

"I'll return this to you."

He didn't manage to catch it; I had thrown it harshly in his face.

It's over, everything's over. I've returned him the ring, returned him the keys. There is nothing left on me, I can start anew now, there's nothing for me to think about in the future, nothing to worry about, nothing to love, nothing to hate.

It actually feels pretty good.

I didn't make a sound, but I was trembling all the while.